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GERMAN RECOGNITION AND CRITICISM OF SHAKESPEARE FROM THE LATE SIXTEENTH THROUGH THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY.

by

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PREFACE

This study, as far as the author knows, has no duplication in the English language. For the average student of Shakespeare, German criticism of him is represented by a few separated remarks by Lessing, Goethe's critique of Hamlet in Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, and Schlegel's Lectures. Actually there is a rather cohesive progression from Gottsched to Schlegel.

Research for this study has been done almost completely from works in the German language. Where the critics themselves are concerned, the original German works were used in all cases with the exception of a couple of essays by Goethe, and the Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature by A. W. Schlegel. The progress of the more important general concepts has received the emphasis.

In the footnotes, it has been found necessary to augment the usual procedure slightly. The numerous types of book-division employed in Germany -- Band, Teil, Abteilung, Stück, etc.,- have made it appear advisable to write out such designations as vol., part, etc., instead of merely employing Roman numerals. Footnotes are numbered consecutively through each chapter. The bibliography does not contain all possible references to the subject, but merely enumerates those available works which were found to have a specific value in the compilation of this study.

Acknowledgment of quoted passages has usually been accomplished by a footnote directly relating to the individual quotation. However,

where I have employed short quotations in the course of an acknowledged summary, the single acknowledgment at the end of the summary has usually been considered sufficiently clear to eliminate the need of separate footnotes.

Translations of passages from the German are invariably my own, except in one or two places where the use of another's translation has been indicated. Where the translations of another have been used, I have checked the general accuracy with the original German.

Introduction

That which has been written about Shakespeare so far exceeds the actual content of his own works that it represents a complete department of literature in itself. Even without the backing of specific figures, it seems absolutely safe to state that William Shakespeare has been responsible for the filling of more pages than any other individual in the whole history of world literature. There are several reasons for this fact. First, Shakespeare was the first un-Aristotelian dramatic writer whose works displayed sufficient creative power and universality to gain renown throughout Europe. Secondly, the doubtful form in which his texts were presented to the public opened a fertile field for scholarly investigation and for controversy. And thirdly, the author himself presented an enigma which none has yet been able to settle decisively. In this respect the two outstanding questions have been: Did a man names Shakespeare actually write the great plays? If he did, which of the plays were all his, which were written in collaboration, and which of those doubtful plays which have customarily been ascribed to Shakespeare did he probably not write? And what were the facts of this writer's life? The fourth reason for the great mass of literature concerning Shakespeare was the sheer breadth and power of his presentation of life and its emotional

manifestations, with the result that not a minority of the material about him belongs less in the department of criticism than in that of eulogy. The furor that Shakespeare caused in the modern world actually reverberated in every corner of the learned world. Thoughts of men about the rules and licenses of literature in general could, for a time, almost never forego a mention of the great English poet; and conversely, thoughts about Shakespeare nearly always necessitated a discussion of literature in general. Thus, any study of Shakespearean criticism must assume the aspect of a survey of the outstanding contributions if it is to be at all wieldly, or it must limit itself very narrowly to a certain aspect or a certain chronological or spatial field.

This paper takes as its purpose a descriptive survey of Shakespearean criticism in Germany from the beginnings until the advent of Schlegel, who represents the culmination of all trends prior to his time, and who becomes the vehicle by which German opinions and discoveries about Shakespeare make their way into the other literatures of Europe. Certain peculiarities of this German criticism before Schlegel (1) influence the emphasis in the present study. First, until 1682 there was no known mention of Shakespeare's name in Germany, although some of his plays had already become familiar through the early presentations by travelling English actors and through clumsy attempts at native adaptation. However, these plays were either unknown to the literary men of the time, or

(1) August Wilhelm von Schlegel, 1767-1849. German critic, poet, and translator of Shakespeare's works.

considered unworthy of mention by them; consequently, as far as Shakespeare is concerned, the period is a critical blank. In fact, except for a couple of insignificant and inadequate lexicon notations, there is no work of Shakespeare until 1740. The period from the beginning of the seventeenth century until 1740 is therefore worthy of no more than survey treatment. From that date until the time of Lessing's first Shakespearean treatment, the real beginnings of the Shakespearean tide are visible. From Lessing, through the Sturm und Drang, down to Schlegel at the start of the nineteenth century, German Shakespearean criticism passes through its greatest philosophical age. This period will receive the chief emphasis.

Another consideration is the aspect upon which the focus will be most accurately adjusted. German work in the field is valuable mainly for its great and far-reaching conclusions as to the nature of Shakespeare's art; for its rapid freeing of the English dramatic poet from the condemning fetters of classical rules, as dogmatically applied by the French; and for its gratifying willingness to recommend the imitation of Shakespeare's technique to writers of the day. The finer elements of investigation in purely scholarly fields--which became during the nineteenth century the Germans' strong point--are mostly absent. Where smaller elements are treated, it is usually from the interpretive standpoint. One or two such treatments are justly famous--e.g., Lessing's clear-headed discussion of Shakespeare's ghost, or Goethe's interpretation of the character of Hamlet

in Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. The greatest mine of German Shakespearean criticism in the formative period under study is of course the deservedly great August Wilhelm Schlegel, whose stupendous achievement in translating most of the plays of Shakespeare into an accurate and natural German stands even today as the pinnacle of translation in any language. His critical work is no less worthy than his translations. Many of his ideas were absorbed by Coleridge and introduced as the basis for the romantic criticism and adoration which ran rampant over nineteenth century England. Schlegel's work includes, or stands on the foundation of, the great philosophical conclusions reached by the Germans as to the nature of Shakespeare's art.(2)

The question of interaction between the critical writings of the three chief nations which concerned themselves largely with Shakespeare has less bearing in the case of Germany than it would with France. The remarkable fact about German opinions on the subject is that they are largely indigenous. Their inspiration, where it existed in the form of other critical writings, was usually in the form of a radical opinion with which they expressed disagreement, not agreement. Seldom does any German writer on Shakespeare mention the English critics. On the other hand, Voltaire stands out as a kind of devil against whom the Germans vent their anti-classical feelings. In England the course of thought on Shakespeare passed through the seventeenth century dominated by an adverse tone. Shakespeare was viewed as a 'child of nature',but no artist. Toward the

(2) By "philosophical", I mean to imply those contributions to Shakespearean criticism which are seeking to determine his place in universal literature, and to unearth the essential spring from which his power gushes. Also the term is used to differentiate this type of criticism from the scholarly investigation of textual matters, etc.

middle of the eighteenth century a few bold critics took it upon themselves to assert that they believed Shakespeare might even have some artistic genius, and finally, after Johnson's famous preface, the idea that Shakespeare was an artist as well as a genius was fairly prevalent. In France Voltaire long dictated the nation's opinion of the Englishman. Gradually, however, France too moved toward its nineteenth-century Shakespeare mania; but in this country Shakespeare always remained a foreigner, although the romantics did profit by a study of his technique. The English were in closer contact with French literature than with German until the early nineteenth century. Consequently, French ideas found their way into Shakespeare's homeland very easily. In the case of Germany, however, there was a great difference. Although English literature was greatly in demand beyond the Rhine, the English themselves were mostly ignorant of the situation of the arts in Germany. German contributions to the Shakespeare controversy entered England in one mass, and in a fairly-well-crystalized condition. As a result, their advent was more startling and their influence more permanent. The scales, which were nearly balanced pro and con, were tipped completely over in the direction of Shakespeare by Schlegel's work and that of the other Germans. Coleridge himself recognized that Shakespeare was first awarded his full glory by the Germans, and not by his own countrymen.

Always of interest in a study of this type are the literary wars which rage about an author. England had them in its usual conservative degree. France had them during the eighteenth century, when Voltaire's

classicism was dominating the country. Germany had only one genuine literary war. It stormed with some violence in the 1750's, but then subsided or at least cooled as the anti-Shakespeare forces lost importance. Gottsched was the leader of the cons, with Lessing's the strongest voice for the pros. Sturm and Drang, we shall see, was so distinctly Shakespearean that the need to write in Shakespeare's defense was all but eliminated. During that rugged age of German literature there were few critical works on the English dramatist. It was rather an age of attempted imitation by Goethe, Lenz, Klinger, and others. With the advent of Goethe-Schiller classicism near the turn of the century, a rift appeared in the Shakespeare trend. Never did it take on the proportions of a literary war, however. The classical Goethe still adored Shakespeare as a poet, but was not so sure of him as a practical dramatist. He felt that Shakespeare was better for the closet than for the stage. On the other hand, the romantic school of the Schlegels (Friedrich and August) and Tieck was developing the trend of Shakespeare adoration. Their approach had the most solid backing of learning and theory behind it of any German critical group.

Because of the peculiarities of Shakespeare's growth of reputation in Germany, an attempt has been made to treat the subject in three parts. Chapter One deals with all of the scanty material as far as Lessing. This chapter may also be subdivided into three sections: the part dealing with anonymous performances of Shakespearean works, and German adaptations; the part dealing with mentions of Shakespeare's name and identity from 1682 until 1740; and the part which takes up the earliest

pre-Lessing criticism of Shakespeare's technique. Chapter Two covers the whole formative period from Lessing to Goethe and the classicists. Here there is a more even progression without distinct divisions. It includes Sturm und Drang. Chapter Three is given over entirely to the romantic school, wherein Shakespearean criticism finally comes to completion and maturity.

CHAPTER ONE

Shakespeare's Entrance into Germany and Early Criticism to Lessing

Shakespeare's entrance into Germany was surprisingly quick. Even in the fading years of the sixteenth century some of his works had been played for German audiences. The mode of their introduction into Germany, however, was detrimental to the extension of the author's fame. English actors crossed the channel on tour, and carried with them some of the plays of Shakespeare. These players covered a broad region in their travels, reports placing them as far east as Warsaw and as far south as Vienna. Apparently language was no great barrier in the eyes of the Germans, for these English renditions of the plays appear to have been popular with the audiences of everyday folk who went to see them.(1) That all of the early presentations were given in English by real English troupes seems certain or at least highly probable. In the years around the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Germany was experiencing an epoch of travelling dramatic troupes. The common name for these early companies

(1) J. G. Robertson, "Shakespeare on The Continent", Cambridge History of English Literature, Cambridge, 1910. Pages 283-308 contain a brief outline of the main trends in France as well as in Germany.

came to be "englische Komödianten". That they actually presented all of their earlier works in English, and that they were actually Englishmen, appears very likely to be true in the light of evidence presented by Dr. Koberstein in his investigatory work on the subject. (2) Circumstantial evidence that the term "englische Komödianten" did not refer only to travelling players in general arises from the fact that another term, "hochdeutsche Komödianten", was later employed in reference to travelling Dutch players. (3)

The appearance of English players in Germany is a fairly well established fact even before the possibility of their carrying with them any of the plays of Shakespeare. Heinrich Julius, who became Herzog of Braunschweig and Lüneburg in 1589, practiced the courtly custom of inviting foreign players to his castle. In addition to being a patron of the arts, Julius was an artist in his own right.(4) From his plays one can see that he was familiar with the English style of clown as early as 1593. (5) In his Von einer Ehebrecherin, Julius employs a plot which bears close relationship to Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor. Actually, however, this last fact need not indicate any connection with

(2) Dr. August Koberstein, "Shakespeares allmähliches Berkanntwerden in Deutschland und Urtheile über ihn bis zum Jahre 1773," Vermischte Aufsätze zur Litteraturgeschichte und Aesthetik, Leipzig, 1858, pp. 166-167.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Among his works are Von der Susanna, Von einem Buler und Bulerin, Von einem Weibe, (1593); Von einer Ehebrecherin, (1594).

(5) Rudolf Genee, Geschichte der Shakespeare'schen Dramen in Deutschland. Leipzig, 1870, p. 10.

Shakespeare, for the plot was a common one in Italian novelle all during the preceding century. (6) It is most unlikely that Shakespeare got his idea from Germany. Throughout Germany it soon became common for dukes to employ English players. Not only, however, were the members of the German aristocracy introduced to English drama through this medium. During the 1590's and on into the 1600's, the city of London was a frequent sojourning-place for Germans. There they at least developed a taste for English drama. (7) Strangely, though, no mention of Shakespeare occurs in Germany until close to the end of the seventeenth century.

The first writer who aroused genuine interest in the possibility of a relationship--certainly indirect--with Shakespeare is the Nürnberg dramatist Jacob Ayrer, whose Opus theatricum appeared shortly after his death in c.1605. Two of his plays are of special interest in this respect. Von der schönen Phänicia bears a resemblance to Shakespeare's treatment of Hero in Much Ado About Nothing. The source of Ayrer's work appears to have been the narration of the story of Timbreo di Cardona by Bandello. A comparison of the three treatments--Ayrer's, Shakespeare's, and Bandello's--gives no evidence of any similarities between Ayrer's version and Shakespeare's which do not also occur in Bandello's. This points to common sources rather than borrowing from one or the other. (8) Among Ayrer's works is another play with a plot somewhat similar to

(6) Ibid., pp. 11-16.

(7) Ibid., pp. 18-19.

(8) Ibid., pp. 22-25.

Shakespeare's The Tempest. This is his Comedia von der schönen Sidea, in which a magician with a beautiful daughter employs his magic to get the son of his enemy into his power, and in which an amorous relationship springs up between the daughter and the captive. Since Ayrer's play was certainly written before Shakespeare's, the question of borrowing by Ayrer is eliminated. Here again it appears most likely that common sources are responsible for the likenesses. (9)

The first example of Shakespeare's work to be printed in Germany appeared in 1620 in Englische Comedien und Tragedien. This collection of adaptations from the English stage included Tragädia von Tito Andronico. Although the rendition is degraded and poorly translated, the stamp of the original is still visible. The fact that this early Shakespearean play alone, and no later one, was placed in this collection leads to the belief that the actors who transported this group of plays to Germany came during the '90's, and remained for many years without renewing their repertoire from later English presentations. (10)

In addition to Titus Andronicus, several other Shakespearean plays appear to have been presented and to have become familiar works in Germany during the early seventeenth century. The earliest hint of a Shakespearean performance which still exists comes from Darmstadt, where a notation declares that a play entitled Der Jud von Venedig aus dem engländischen was presented in honor of the Hessian Landgrave

(9) Ibid., pp. 27-30.

(10) Ibid., pp. 34-42.

Philipp von Butzbach at the court of the Administrator of Magdeburg in 1611. Whether this was the Shakespearean Merchant of Venice cannot be stated with certainty, although it seems probable, for lack of contrary evidence, that it was. (11) The year 1626 marks the point where our knowledge passes onto firmer ground. In an old almanac (still in existence) edited by Magister Johann Kretschmer in Dresden in 1626, there appears a full list of dramas presented by "die englischen Comödianten" from June to December in that year. On the second of June we find the "Tragoedia von Romeo und Julietta" noted; on the eighth, "Tragoedia von Julio Cesare"; on the twenty-fourth, "Tragoedia von Hamlet einen Printzen in Dennemark"; on the thirteenth of July, "Comödia von Josepho Juden von Venedigk"; on the twenty-sixth of September, "Tragödia von Lear, Konig in Engelandt". (12) Concerning the proximity of these works to the original we can only speculate indirectly on the basis of a manuscript of Romio und Julietta in German which was found in the Imperial Library at Vienna. The handwriting dates the work sometime in the second half of the seventeenth century. The list of characters corresponds closely to that of the original, including: Fürst, Capolet, Mundige (Montague), Paris, Romio, Mercutius, Penvolio, Tipolt, Gräfin Capolet, Julieta, and Antoneta (the nurse). There is also a clown, named, according to dramatic practice among the English players,

(11) Ibid., p. 164.

(12) From the list as given by Genee, op. cit., pp. 166-167. Besides these Shakespearean works, the list also includes plays by nearly all the prominent Elizabethan writers of plays.

"Pickelhäring". The work is largely in prose, with a few passages in rimed verse. The story follows Shakespeare's. (13) Although we do not have specific references to these performances after 1626, it can perhaps be safely assumed that they were continued throughout the remainder of the century from time to time.

By 1658 another play of Shakespeare seems to have been adapted into German. According to Genée, Gottsched notes that on the fifth, sixth, and seventh of March, a work entitled Die wunderbare Heurath Petruvio mit der bösen Catharinen was performed at the Zittau theater. The performers were, in the opinion of Cohn, (14) members of the Gymnasium school under the rectorship of Christian Keimann, who had adapted and presented other works previous to this. How nearly this play coincides with Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew cannot be determined, for no manuscript has survived.

Andreas Gryphius (1616-64) reveals Shakespearean influence in his satirical Absurda Comica, Oder Herr Peter Squentz. This drama is based upon the comic interlude of A Midsummer Night's Dream. The date of Absurda Comica is set by Genée (15) at 1663. This then would give credence to the suggestion that it was not based upon the Shakespearean original, but rather upon the reworking of the comic episode by Richard

(13) Ibid., pp. 168-173.

(14) A. Cohn, Shakespeare in Germany in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Berlin, 1865.

(15) Genee, op. cit., p. 174.

Cox. This piece had made its appearance in 1647, just about the time that the Puritans closed the theaters. Actors who were thrown out of work by the order might well have taken this piece along as part of their repertoire during a German tour. The immediate source of the idea, Gryphius said, was the Altdorf professor Daniel Schwenter. If Schwenter was actually the source of the idea for Gryphius, then Cox's version of the comic interlude, entitled Bottom the Weaver, could not have been the original source for the story. Daniel Schwenter lived from 1585 to 1636. Bottom the Weaver dates from 1647. This fact then makes it necessary that Schwenter should have heard of the story from another source than Cox. Whether that source could have been the original Midsummer Night's Dream cannot be determined. Possibly it was a Dutch version of the play, or of the interlude alone, which became known to Schwenter. (16) Gryphius might still have made use of Cox's Bottom the Weaver, however, in the actual composition of his play.

Again in 1672 we find evidence of knowledge of the story of The Taming of the Shrew. In the earlier appearance of this plot, we have only a notation that a play entitled Die wunderbare Heurath Petruvio mit der bösen Catharinen was performed at Zittan. But in 1672 the full version of a play based upon this story was printed, and a copy still survives. The title is Kunst über alle Künste, Ein bös Weib gut zu machen. It is a five-act version which bears close similarities to Shakespeare's work. The author or adaptor is unknown, but from remarks

(16) Koberstein, op. cit., pp. 168-170.

on the title-page of the book, it seems that he believed the story was of Italian origin. (17) However, both the general sequence of scenes, and the dialogue in part, correspond more than coincidentally with The Taming of the Shrew. The name of the shrew remains "Katharina", but the tamer becomes "Hartmann" in order to give the play a German flavor. (18) Very likely this play is indirectly related to the Shakespearean original --perhaps several times removed from, but still a descendant of, the great English author's work.

Shakespeare's Twelfth Night next represents the rising influence of the Stratfordite in Germany. In 1677 the play Tugend und Liebesstreit, ein Freudenspiel was performed at the birthday celebration of the Herzogin von Braunschweig, in her new play-hall. The immediate source of the compiler's materials was Barnaby Rich's Apolonius und Silla in the German version. The plot is that of Twelfth Night. The brother and sister, Sebastian and Viola, are in this play named Silvius and Silla. Duke Orsino becomes Herzog Apolonius von Venedig, and Clivia becomes Agalanta, a maiden from Venice. The action is near enough to Shakespeare's play to make the connection between the two fairly certain. (19)

Two plays by the dramatist Michael Kongehl (20) are worthy of but slight mention. They are Die vom Tode erweckte Phönizia and Der unschuldig-beschuldigten Innocentien Unschuld, both dated about the year

(17) "Vormahls von einem Ilatienischen Cavalier practiciret." As quoted in Genee, op. cit., p. 179.

(18) Ibid., pp. 179-184.

(19) Ibid., pp. 184-185.

(20) Michael Kongehl, 1646-1710, author of many plays distinguished by their involved and euphuistic titles.

1680. The first treats the story of Much Ado About Nothing and the second bears a resemblance to Shakespeare's Cymbeline. Almost certainly, however, the sources of both were not Shakespearean, but rather the Italian novels. (21)

Toward the end of the century Christian Weise becomes the most prominent in the reworking of Shakespearean material. His new rendition of the "Peter Squentz" plot in 1682 covers the same story that Gryphius treated in 1663. Weise (22) named his work Lustiges Nachspiel, and gave credit to Gryphius as his source. It is the comic interlude section of A Midsummer Night's Dream -- undoubtedly Shakespearean, but by a roundabout course. (23) A later work of Weise - one which never reached print - was unearthed in a manuscript dated 1705. This is the Taming of the Shrew again, named by Weise Die böse Catharina. There is no specific mention of the source of this work, but possible ones are plentiful. Twice previously in the seventeenth century we have found treatments of the story. Weise could have known about them, or at least about one of them. Even in addition to this possibility is the likelihood of a Dutch version which might have fallen into his hands. (24) It is interesting to note the apparent popularity of The Taming of the Shrew in its various German adaptations. The similarity of the comic elements to the old dramas of Hans Sachs is evident, and perhaps explains why this play was

(21) Genee, op. cit., pp. 185-192.

(22) Christian Weise (1642-1708) was author of at least fifty plays, thirty-one of which appeared in print.

(23) Ibid., pp. 192-196.

(24) Robertson, op. cit., pp. 283ff.

so well fitted to the taste of German audiences.

During the last two decades of the 1600's a version of Hamlet had come into being under the title Der bestrafte Brudermord oder: Prinz Hamlet von Dänemark. The existing manuscript is dated "den 17. Oktober 1710", but the technique of the work tends to show a much earlier origin. Genée dates it between 1680 and 1700. The work most certainly springs ultimately from Shakespeare's Hamlet. As an artistic work in its own right, however, the play is almost worthless. Names have been changed, poetic expression obliterated, and the whole action shamefully degraded. (25)

With Weise's Die böse Catharina and the anonymous Der bestrafte Brudermord, we have come to the end of the minor uses and adaptations of Shakespearean material into German. Not one of the adaptors has given the slightest evidence of any acquaintance with the author of the originals. The manner in which the plays were first introduced into Germany--by stage troupes and not in books--may explain this ignorance. The generally low position of art and letters in pre-Gottsched Germany would be another factor detrimental to a serious interest in the factors behind the stage-portrayals.

During the seventeenth century five of Shakespeare's plays were certainly presented in a form which must have been close to the original

(25) Genee, op. cit., pp. 196-197.

English. These are the five whose performances were recorded in Kretschmer's Almanac of the year 1626--Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice, and King Lear. (26) One more fairly safe addition to the above five is Titus Andronicus as it appeared in German in Englische Comedien und Tragedien (1620). Among the probably-known plays are A Midsummer Night's Dream, and The Taming of the Shrew. Others of the plays were very likely presented, in whole or in part, at times during the century, although no specific mentions of such presentations have come down to us. In the case of a few plays -- Much Ado About Nothing, The Tempest, Twelfth Night, and Cymbeline -- the evidence points to common sources.

So far this study has not touched upon the critical realm. To be sure, no authoritative Shakespearean criticism could have existed when one considers that the few plays of the Englishman which were performed or printed were not in the original, nor were they even known to have been by the same author. In fact, Shakespeare's name was unknown in Germany, or at least never mentioned, until the year 1682. From this year dates the beginning of German Shakespeare criticism -- although a very meager beginning it was. Actually this first mention of Shakespeare is a mere confession by the writer that he had not heard of the "Shakespeare" whom Dryden treated. This historically important, but critically insignificant

(26) For the exact quotations from the Almanac, in German, see above in this paper.

passage by Daniel Georg Morhof reads as follows: "John Dryden hat gar wohl gelehrt von der dramatica Poesi geschrieben. Die Engelländer, die er hierinnen anführet, sind Shakespeare, Fletcher, Beaumont, von welchen ich nichts gesehen habe. Ben Johnson (sic) hat gar viel geschrieben, welcher meines Erachtens kein geringes Lob verdienet".....(27) However slight the intrinsic worth of such a brief remark, it at least indicates that Shakespeare's name has at last made its way across the Rhine.

Despite the fact that Morhof expressed his ignorance about these English writers, no one seems to have been inspired to investigate further. Until 1694 and 1695 nothing more appears in print about Shakespeare, and then these are merely non-evaluative mentions of the name. (28)

The first mention of Shakespeare which expresses an opinion about his dramatic ability appears in the year 1708, but even here the opinion is not that of the German writer, Barthold Feind, but of the critic from whose work he is citing. The section referred to states Temple's ideas on the power of Shakespeare over the emotions:-

> Mr. le Chevalier Temple in seinem Essai de la Poesie erzehlet p. 374, dass etliche, wenn sie des renommirten Englischen Tragici Shakespear Trauerspiele verlesen hören, offt lautes Halses an zu schreyen gefangen, und häuffige Thränen vergossen. (29)

(27) Daniel Georg Morhof, Unterricht von der Teutschen Sprache und Poesie, Kiel, 1682, p. 250.

(28) In 1694 Cramer's (J. F.) Vindiciae Nominis Germanici, contra quosdam Obstrectatores Gallos, published at Amsterdam; and in 1695 Acta Eruditorum, published at Leipzig.

(29) Barthold Feind, Gedanken von der Opera, Gedichte I, Stade, 1708, p. 109.

In the very next year appeared the first notation which indicated a knowledge of Shakespeare himself. This was a short biographical sketch of the author's life which is to be found in Johann Franz Buddeus' Allgemeines historisches Lexicon, published at Leipzig in 1709. (30) The article, copied from Collier's Historical Dictionary, gives a most inadequate treatment of Shakespeare. The same article was taken over by Johann Burckhard Mencke's Gelehrten-Lexicon in 1715. (31) This last publication was put out in two later editions (1725, 1733), both of which carried this same article with but slight change:

> Shakespeare (Wilh.) ein englischer Dramaticus, geboren zu Stratford 1564, ward schlecht auferzogen und verstund kein Latein, jedoch brachte er es in der Poesie sehr hoch. Er hatte ein schertzhafftes Gemüthe, kunte aber doch auch sehr ernsthafft seyn, und excellirte in Tragödien. Er hatte viel sinnreiche und subtile Streitigkeiten mit Ben Johnson (sic), wiewohl keine von Beyden viel damit gewann. Er starb zu Stratford 1616. 23. April im 53. Jahre. Seine Schau- und Trauer-Spiele, deren er sehr viel geschrieben, sind in VI Teilen 1709 zu London zusammen gedruckt und werden sehr hoch gehalten. (32)

Despite the shortness of the above article, it is still encouraging to observe that at last, ninety-nine years after the death of the dramatist, a few facts of his life have been found worthy of publication in an encyclopedic work. Even through the year 1751, this was the extent of published knowledge about the personality of Shakespeare. (33)

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(30) The reference appears in volume IV of the work, according to the Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature: "Allgemeines historisches Lexicon. ed. J. F. Buddeus, vol. IV, Leipzig, 1709."

(31) Robertson, op. cit., pp. 283ff.

(32) Compendiöses Gelehrten-Lexicon, ed. J. F. Buddeus, vol. IV, Leipzig, 1715. (As quoted by Genee, op. cit., p. 61.)

(33) In the year 1751 an edition of the same lexicon carried the above passage, with the slight additional information that Theobald had edited a new complete Shakespeare. Cf. Genee, op. cit., p. 63.

Only two more writers who mentioned Shakespeare still stand in the period of Shakespearean obscurity in Germany. The 1732 edition of Ludolff Bentheim's Engelländischer Kirch- und Schulen-Staat contained a brief mention of Shakespeare in the chapter entitled "Von den Gelehrten in Engeland":

> Willian Shakespear, kam zu Stratford in Warwickshire auf diese Welt. Seine Gelehrtheit war sehr schlecht, und daher verwunderte man sich um destomehr, dass er ein fürtrefflicher Poeta war. Er hatte einen sinnreichen Kopff, voller Schertz, und war in Tragödien und Comoedien so glücklich, dass er auch einen Heraclitum zum Lachen und einen Democritum zum Weinen bringen konnte. (34)

Here is one more recognition of his great power. The discouraging factor is that the recognition is perhaps the result of a second-hand acquaintance with Shakespeare through the English critics, and probably does not arise from personal consideration by Bentheim himself. The passage does not seem to refer to the enduring qualities of the plays, but rather to their recorded impact upon Elizabethan audiences.

The last of these German critics whose knowledge of Shakespeare was indirect and shadowy made his appearance in Switzerland. He was Johann Jacob Bodmer, whose excellent work on John Milton reached publication under the title Milton's Verlust des Paradieses at Zurich in 1732. His comments on Shakespeare, however, are of a later date-- on the

(34) H. L. Bentheim, Engelländischer Kirch- und Schulen-Staat, Leipzig, 1732. (As quoted by Genee, op. cit., p. 62.)

very brink of the bursting of the bud of Shakespearean study. His Critische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie, published at Zurich in 1740, contains a reference to an English "Saspar" whom, as in the case of Milton and others, even the English were slow to appreciate. The passage reads as follows:

> Sie (the Germans) sind noch in dem Zustand, in welchem die Engelländer viele Jahre gestanden, eh ihnen geschickte Kunstrichter die Schönheiten in Miltons Gedichte nach und nach wahrzunehmen gegeben und sie damit bekannt gemacht hatten, ungeachtet diese Nation an ihrem Saspar und andern den Geschmack zu diesem höhern und feinern Ergetzen zu schärfen, eine Gelegenheit gehabt hatte, der unsere Nation beinahe beraubet ist. (35)

That this "Saspar" actually was an attempt of Bodmer to germanize the name Shakespeare, or that it was at least undoubtedly a corruption of the name, becomes evident in the light of statements appearing one year later in Bodmer's Critische Betrachtungen der poetischen Gemählde der Dichter. There are two separated passages which, from their content, obviously refer to none other than Shakespeare. The first mentions A Midsummer Night's Dream specifically: "Der engelländische Sasper (sic) hat in seinem sommernächtlichen Traume eine Beschreibung von Hunden, die wegen etlicher ganz besonderer Pinselzüge obiger an der Seite zu stehen verdient." (36) This is followed by a prose translation of Theseus' speech about his hounds from scene one of act four in the original of Shakespeare. The second passage, later in the same work, refers to

(35) Johann Jacob Bodmer, Critische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie, Zurich, 1740. (As quoted by Koberstein, op. cit., footnote p. 173.)

(36) Johann Jacob Bodmer, Critische Betrachtungen der poetischen Gemählde der Dichter, Zurich, 1741, p. 170.

"Sasper's" use of spirits:

> Unter den Engelländern hat Sasper den Ruhm, dass er in der Vorstellung solcher Geister und Phantasiewesen, deren Ursprung auf den Aberglauben und die Leichtgläubigkeit gegrundet ist, etwas Besonderes gehabt habe, und sie pflegen sich von ihm auszudrücken, dass keinem andern vergönnt sei, den Fuss in den von ihm gezogenen Zauberkreis zu setzen. (37)

Finally we have a mention of Shakespeare in Germany which smacks of criticism, however feeble and unauthoritative it might be. The above represents a germ of interest in the intrinsic elements of the plays, and a forerunner of Lessing's famous observations on the Ghost in Hamlet.

The year 1741 marks an important turning point in the rise of Shakespeare in Germany. A recapitulation of the events to this date would reveal nothing outstanding. The seventeenth century was dotted with anonymous performances of adaptations. From the year 1682 we have evidence that Shakespeare's name has at last become known. Since that time appearances of the name in print number less than a dozen during a lapse of nearly sixty years. Only one of these appearances approaches the realm of criticism (Bodmer), and only one denotes an acquaintance with the writer's personality (The lexicon articles emanating originally from Buddeus). The rest are of interest only to show that a few people, down through the period from 1682 to 1741, had vague knowledge of the dramatic writer who was soon to have such a terrific impact upon the whole literary sphere of Germany. Even in 1737 Shakespeare was so little known,

(37) Ibid., p. 593.

or considered of so little importance, that Gottsched (38) ignored him altogether in his edition (the second) of Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst für die Deutschen, even though he treats other English dramatists at some length. What Gottsched did do, however, was to set up a ready made core of opposition against any form of unorthodox dramatic technique, so that when an accredited Shakespearean drama at last made its way into a fairly good German translation in 1741, the critical guns of the Leipzig classicists, with Gottsched as their trigger-man, were already loaded and aimed to expunge the interloper.

Gottsched would probably have enjoyed seeing Shakespeare enter Germany on staggering legs, open and vulnerable to attack, if indeed it was necessary that he enter at all. If he did not come regally with flying banners, he at least come with a proud bearing and a relentlessly projected chin. Julius Caesar was the drama which ushered him in. This translation by the Prussian nobleman Caspar Wilhelm von Borck (39) was the first true translation of a Shakespearean play into any language. It appeared at Berlin in 1741 under the title "Versuch einer gebundenen Uebersetzung des Trauerspiels von dem Tode des Julius Cäsar. Aus dem Englischen Werke des Shakespear." The author's modesty in speaking of his achievement in the preface to the work is undue. He appears to

(38) Johann Christoph Gottsched, (1700-1766) German writer, educator, and critic, assumed as his life's goal the establishment of German literary, and especially dramatic art on the firm ground of French classicism. He established himself at Leipzig, where he dominated the Deutsche Gesellschaft and became the virtual "Diktator des Geschmacks".--Adolf Bartels, Geschichte der deutschen Litteratur, in zwei Bänden, Leipzig, 1901, vol. I, pp. 242-244.

(39) Caspar Wilhelm von Borck had spent a few years in London as Prussian ambassador.

estimate his contribution far less seriously than it deserves. In a fun-making style, he claims that it is merely an occupation of his idleness, an attempt by a man who cannot create a worthy artistic product himself to gain a reputation in the learned world by means of a translation. He expects criticism. He welcomes correction. "Niemand aber wird ihm einen grössern Gefallen thun, als wer die gegenwärtige Arbeit vernünftig durchziehet, und die häufigen Fehler daraus entdecket." (40) The laws of the drama he professes not to understand, and therefore offers no apology for this play. He promises more of the same sort of thing if this work receives consideration. "Dadurch wird der Verfasser recht aufgemuntert werden in seinem Müssiggange noch mehr dergleichen gestohlne Schriften auszuhecken, und den Buchdruckern Arbeit zu verschaffen." (41) Why the attempt should have been rejected is hard to understand. Only a bigot like Gottsched would have cast it aside as worthless and harmful to German letters. Actually, although the translation cannot be compared with the excellent work by Schlegel and Tieck, it was a useful and for the most part accurate version of Julius Caesar. Neither can it be said that art was lacking. Even if the use of Alexandrine couplets appears to be a faux pas to modern Shakespearean translators, still it must be remembered that in 1741 that was the accepted peak of artistic form. A brief sample of von Borck's work, taken from the funeral speech of

(40) From the complete rendition of von Borck's preface to Julius Caesar as given by Genee, op. cit., p. 429.

(41) Genee, loc. cit.

Antony, will serve to illustrate this translator's ability:

> Römer, Landesleute,
> Und Freunde, neigt das Ohr zu mir und hört mich heute.
> Ich Komme, Cäsars Leich anjetzt, o! glaubet mir,
> Nur zu beerdigen, nicht ihn zu preisen hier.
> Das Uebel lebt nach uns, was wir begangen haben,
> Und was wir Gutes thun, wird oft mit uns begraben.
> So mags mit Cäsar sein. Der edle Brutus hat
> Euch alleweil erzählt: Er gab dem Ehrgeitz Statt.
> Es wäre, wär es wahr, ein grausam gross Verbrechen:
> Und grausam habt ihr es gesehn, an Cäsern rächen.
> Hier unter Brutus Gunst, und andrer, fang ich an.
> (Denn Brutus ist gewiss ein ehrlich braver Mann.)....(42)

Certainly this is far from Shakespeare's original as far as style is concerned, but the content is correct. The criticism which Gottsched immediately hurled upon Shakespeare and von Borck was unwarranted.

This Gottschedian criticism was to be expected. The hero of German classicism at this time was the Frenchman Voltaire, who had lashed Shakespeare from his first acquaintance with his work. (43) Gottsched not only assumed the Voltairean role in Germany, but also took over the Frenchman's prejudice against Shakespeare. Actually Gottsched had only disdain for Shakespeare. His remarks began with a decisive pronouncement against von Borck's Julius Caesar. Shakespeare stood for but one thing to Gottsched--a potential disrupter of the plan he had laid for a regulated classical German drama. His attack was short, but absolute. He said:

> Die Uebersetzungssucht ist so stark unter uns eingerissen, dass man ohne Unterscheid Gutes und Böses in unsre Sprache

(42) Caspar Wilhelm von Borck, Der Tod des Julius Cäsar, Berlin, 1741, act III, scene II.

(43) Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778) long dictated French literary policies, and was the dominating anti-Shakespeare force throughout the eighteenth century. Under his tutelage the Academy pronounced a declamation against the Stratfordite which quieted pro-Shakespearean voices until the beginning of the Romantic era.

> bringt: gerade als ob alles was ausländisch ist, schön und vortrefflich wäre; und als ob wir nicht selbst schon bessere Sachen aus den eigenen Köpfen unsrer Landsleute aufzuweisen hätten. Die elendeste Haupt- und Staats- Action unsrer gemeinen Comödianten ist kaum so voll Schnitzer und Fehler wider die Regeln der Schaubühne und gesunden Vernunft, als dieses Stück Shakespears ist. Der Herr Uebersetzer also, wenn er, wie er drohet, noch mehr übersetzen will, beliebe sich unmassgeblich, bessere Urschriften zu wählen, womit er unsre Schaubühne bereichern will, ehe er sich diese Mühe giebt: sonst wird ihm Deutschland keinen grössern Dank dafür wissen, als unsern Comödianten, die uns auch eine Menge Stücke aufführen, die sie aus allen kleinen Geistern der Franzosen übersetzet, die von ihren eigenen Landsleuten ausgezischet und verworfen worden. (44)

This is Gottsched the classicist speaking. His principal criticism against Shakespeare is that rules are broken. The most wretched of the performances of the German travelling players, he holds, commits no more infractions of the rules than this play by Shakespeare. He compares Julius Caesar to that "mass of pieces, translated from all the minor spirits among the French, which are hissed off the stage and cast out by their own people." He is intolerant. He will not even go to the length of Voltaire in admitting that Shakespeare has an erratic and uncouth genius at rare intervals. In short, this passage is not an attempt at persuasion by a scholar, but a plain pronouncement by a dictator. It is the first significant German Shakespearean criticism. It represents the lowest depths to which Shakespeare's name was dragged in that country. From this point progress is steadily upward. Shakespearean criticism in

(44) Johann Christoph Gottsched, Beyträge zur Critischen Historie der Deutschen Sprache, Poesie und Beredsamkeit, Leipzig, 1741, vol. VII, p. 516.

Germany began at the bottom with Gottsched, and ascended to the heights of reason and appreciation with August Schlegel.

This unjustly scathing attack by Gottsched is less important in itself than for the stimulus it gave to the suddenly born opposition. In the very next issue after the appearance of the above article (Gottsched's Beytrȁge originally appeared in periodical form), Johann Elias Schlegel succeeded in entering a pro-Shakespearean comparison of the English dramatist's Julius Caesar with the Leo Armenius of Andreas Gryphius. In the light of modern appraisals of the two works, such a comparison is ridiculous. The two works are in opposite spheres of quality. The important thing about Schlegel's article is that he did make a few original and worthy remarks about Shakespeare, and that he did dare to state that, although Shakespeare was completely unclassical, he displayed certain dramatic virtues that an earlier German dranatist had also possessed. But here, even in Schlegel, there is to be noted a slowness to go "all out" for Shakespeare--perhaps the result of his training, which was definitely guided by Gottsched. Concerning possible errors of translation, Schlegel was qualified to speak. He was fully familiar with the original Julius Caesar in English. He sympathizes with von Borck's difficulties, and shows how he himself would have improved one passage. Passing on to the question of dramatic rules, he observes that, among the English, much less stress is placed upon this feature of play-writing. "Das erste, was man bei einem Schauspiele zu beobachten hat, ist die Einrichtung desselben. Aber eben dieses pfleget

bei den Engelländern insgemein das letzte zu sein. Wenn ich nach demjenigen urtheilen soll, was ich in der englischen Schaubühne gelesen habe: so sind ihre Schauspiele mehr Nachahmungen der Personen, als Nachahmungen einer gewissen Handlung." (45) Here then is a hint that Shakespeare has written a different type of drama from the Ancients, a type in which imitations of persons takes precedence over imitations of technique. From this Schlegel goes ahead to show the skill of Shakespeare in letting his characters be developed through the speeches of others about them. In conclusion, he cautiously recommends the reading of Shakespeare in these terms:

> Ich glaube nunmehr, dass ich dem Shakespear sein völliges Recht widerfahren lassen; und das diejenigen, die alte Poeten lieben, wo mehr ein selbstwachsender Geist, als Regeln herrschen, und die sich nicht abschrecken lassen, etwas rauhes zu lesen, und die Tugenden eines Poeten zu bewundern wissen, ohne seine Fehler hochzuachten, eine genauere Vergleichung dieser beyden Leute mit vielem Vergnügen machen werden. (46)

Upon reading Schlegel, one feels that he is restraining his genuine feeling for Shakespeare. He is searching for adequate reasons for the natural attraction that Shakespeare exerts upon his emotions. He really is much more enthusiastic than he is willing to show. Truly, however, even that which he does dare to say must have required some boldness on his part. Schlegel is disagreeing with Gottsched in Gottsched's own publication, and only one issue after the "dictator's" judgment.

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(45) Johann Elias Schlegel, "Vergleichung Shakespears mit Andreas Gryphius," Beyträge zur Critischen Historie der Deutschen Sprache, Poesie und Beredsamkeit, Leipzig, 1741, vol. VII, p. 545.

(46) Ibid., p. 572.

The Schlegel-Gottsched statements represent the beginning of the first controversy over Shakespeare's dramatic ability in Germany. Gottsched carried his side of the argument almost alone. His opinions continued to appear in various publications until the end of his life. Constantly it is the same old saw--Shakespeare does not observe the unities, Shakespeare does not maintain dramatic propriety, Shakespeare is uncultured. Gottsched found many opinions to oppose, outstanding among them those of the "Spectator". He even went so far as to misrepresent the statements of Mrs. Lenox in Shakespeare Illustrated (47) to the effect that Shakespeare had weaknesses, but was still a genius. Gottsched emphasized the weaknesses, and implied that Mrs. Lenox considered them condemning. (48)

In his own time Gottsched's opinions bore considerable weight, but the multiplicity of the opposition moved unerringly toward victory. When Gottsched died in 1766, whether he realized it or not, the work of his lifetime to erect a French classicism in Germany was irretrievably undermined. The climactic blow was actually struck several years before that by Lessing. Between J. E. Schlegel and Lessing, however, appeared two strongly anti-Gottschedian articles which contained some ideas later recruited by Lessing. The first appeared in 1753 in the newly established periodical, Neue Erweiterungen der Erkenntniss und des Vergnügens, at

(47) "Shakespeare illustrated: or the Novels and Histories, on which the plays of Shakespeare are founded, collected and translated from the original authors, with critical Remarks," London, 1753.

(48) Cf. Genee, op. cit., pp. 69-73, and Koberstein, op. cit., footnote 20, p. 179.

Frankfort. It is a biographical-critical treatment of Shakespeare by the sympathetic editors of the publication, who remain anonymous. The biographical material is scholarly and well written--based no doubt on the previous English biographies. (49) The outstanding judgment of the article concerns Shakespeare's lack of knowledge of Aristotle, and the consequent injustice of expecting that he would write the type of drama that would conform to Aristotelian rules:

> Freilich wird man Fehler finden, besonders wenn man nach Aristoteles Regeln seine Trauerspiele untersucht. Allein Shakespeare liess sich nur durch die Natur leiten, und es würde hart seyn, ihn nach den Gesetzen zu beurtheilen, die ihm unbekannt waren. (50)

This idea that Shakespeare has produced a kind of drama to which classical rules do not apply goes beyond Lessing and smacks of the Sturm und Drang. In this same publication, three years later in 1756, another stride along the path of Shakespeare-appreciation was taken by the printing of a translation of several scenes from Richard III.

The other article referred to above was by Christoph Friedrich Nicolai, who later became the close friend of Lessing. It appeared in a little volume of his own works entitled Briefe über den jetzigen Zustand der schönen Wissenschaften in Deutschland, published in Berlin in 1755. In letter number 11 he pronounces that Shakespeare's fame springs from

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(49) Cf. Genee, op. cit., pp.74-76.

(50) From "Merkwürdige Lebensbeschreibung des Herrn William Shakespears", Neue Erweiterungen der Erkenntniss und des Vergnügens, Frankfort, 1753. (As quoted by Genee, op. cit., p. 76.)

the excellence of his character portrayal--"Shakespeare--heisst es weiter --ein Mann ohne Kenntniss der Regeln, ohne Gelehrsamkeit, ohne Ordnung, hat der Mannigfaltigkeit und der Stärke seiner Charaktere, den grössten Theil des Ruhmes zu danken." (51) Further, he holds that this greatness and many-sidedness of character is one of the outstanding categories in which the Germans can profit by a study of the English. He advises avoidance, however, of the wildness and irregularity, and of the disorderly dialogue, of the English. Classicism still can be observed exercising its restraining influence on Nicolai. (52)

Nicolai brings us to the edge of the "great" age of German Shakespeare criticism, which begins in earnest with Lessing's famous Letter No. 17 in 1759. When one considers the fact that the criticism mentioned in this paper so far constitutes all of the thinking on Shakespeare which has reached print in Germany in the more than a century and a quarter since the dramatist's death, the slowness of idea-exchange in eighteenth-century Europe appears especially striking. There is a reason for it. England was alone in the experience of its romantic interlude under the reign of Elizabeth. France, in emerging from the extravagant unimpressiveness of the sixteenth century, fell so solidly under the influence of classical "precieusité" that the more genuine art of a Shakespeare would have appeared out of order; and when

(51) As quoted from Nicolai by Genee, op. cit., p. 79.

(52) Cf. Koberstein, op. cit., p. 191.

Shakespeare finally was introduced there, it was by his arch-enemy, Voltaire. Germany was in the throes of evolving some sort of literary order out of the most meager of materials. Shakespeare did come to the common people early, but the learned set in Germany was trying to imitate the French, and hardly knew that England had a literature. When Shakespeare at last entered Germany, he had to subdue the French influence and implant the English. This is one factor which makes Shakespeare so important to the history of German letters--namely, that the overthrow of the classical school of art à la French was brought about largely by example set by Shakespeare's works. Actually the results have been remarkable looked at from the standpoint that, until the coming of Wieland's translations, the only sample of Shakespeare in the German language was von Borck's Caesar. The next chapter of this study finds Shakespeare the core around which the flames of Sturm und Drang rage. Gottschedian antagonism fades into nothingness and a new era of adoration and imitation begins. The names of von Gerstenberg, Goethe, Herder, and Schlegel stand out among the numerous Shakespeare-philes. Voices of discord are almost mute.

CHAPTER TWO

Shakespeare from Lessing through the Sturm und Drang and Classicism.

The period from 1750 until c. 1810 represents Shakespeare's great age in Germany. It is the age of ardent imitation and adoring appreciation. It is also the age in which the most universal minds put themselves to the task of freeing Shakespeare from condemnation on the ground of rules unapplicable to his art. The men who deal with Shakespeare during this span of years are not scholarly specialists, like those who took over the work in the nineteenth century, but are sincere world-spirits who are striving not for absolutes in narrow fields, but for far-reaching relative concepts and interpretations. Very seldom (except in the case of translators) do they concern themselves with textual criticism. Actually, they are following up the project undertaken by Gottsched--the attempt to establish a German national drama. Their approach, however, is open minded, and consequently the exact opposite of Gottsched's. Where the latter expected to pluck his rules ready-made from the French and force them upon Germany, these new writers looked abroad for that type of drama which seemed most akin to the German mind, and found it not in France but in England. They did not make the mistake which the French and German classicists had made before them: they did not assume that Aristotle had

established the rules upon which the Greek drama was later founded, but realized that Aristotle based his observations upon the drama which was already before him. Therefore, in their own quest, they took the drama of Shakespeare at its face value, and attempted to explain why it was effective and how it could be used as a model for German dramatic writers; they followed Aristotle's method of evolving an understanding of dramatic technique from plays which had proved their stageworthiness. Shakespeare's influence upon the early manifestations of romanticism in Germany was somewhat similar to his influence in England. But in Germany it was far more important. There Shakespeare was probably the largest single influence--especially upon the drama. And it was from Germany that this influence spread back to England via Coleridge, there affecting all fields of literature including the very Shakespearean closet drama of the early nineteenth century.

Shakespeare's critical triumphal-march begins with Lessing. In the year 1750 the young Lessing published his first mention of Shakespeare in Beiträge zur Historie und Aufnahme des Theaters.(1) It was merely a mention, and no more, in which he declares that the English dramatists, among whom he names Shakespeare, would serve as well as objects of German esteem as the much prized French poets. For a disciple of Gottsched (at this time Lessing actually was) and a classicist by training, this remark is somewhat out-of-line. Apparently, however, there was as yet no firm conviction behind it. In the very same article Lessing expresses his high

(1) Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Beiträge zur Historie und Aufnahme des Theaters, (erstes Stück), Stuttgard, 1750. (Preface)

esteem for Gottsched, and voices the hope that the latter's history of the theater might soon appear.(2)

In the same class as the above mention, as far as brevity is concerned, stands Lessing's second printed opinion on Shakespeare. Here, however, he does show clearly that his preference has turned completely toward the English stage above the French. In his Theatralische Bibliothek, fourth issue, in the year 1758, the following statement is to be found:

> "Endlich ward zu Anfang des vorigen Jahrhunderts das englische Theater auf eine weit höhere Staffel der Vollkommenheit gebracht. Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, und Ben Jonson waren die grossen Genies, die es mit unsterblichen Werken bereicherten und es auf einmal zu einem Theater machten, welches nach dem griechischen für einen Kenner der schönen Wissenschaften das aller interessanteste ist und dem Ansehen nach auch bleiben wird." (3)

This opinion would certainly not appeal to Gottsched. At this point we can assume that Lessing has definitely embarked on his life course, and that the break with his former master is imminent.

The promised break came in the very next year in the form of Lessing's famous "Letter No. 17". Along with Friedrich Nicolai and Moses Mendelssohn, two kindred literary spirits and personal friends, Lessing had founded in 1758 the excellent Briefe, die neueste Litteratur betreffend. Nicolai had made a statement in praise of Gottsched's contribution to

(2) Cf. Bartels, op. cit., vol 1, p. 314, and Genee, op. cit., p. 82

(3) Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Sämtliche Schriften (herausgegeben von Karl Lachmann), Leipzig, 1854. Vol. IV, p. 320.

German drama in the Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften. He had said in unguarded exuberance that no one would deny that the German stage has Professor Gottsched to thank for a great part of its early improvement. Lessing took this remark of Nicolai's as a challenge, and proceeded from an erasure of Gottsched's value to an uncompromising exaltation of Shakespeare above the greatest of the French:

> "Niemand, sagen die Verfasser der Bibliothek, wird leugnen, dass die deutsche Schaubühne einen grossen Theil ihrer ersten Verbesserungen dem Herrn Professor Gottsched zu danken habe." Ich bin dieser Niemand; ich leugne es gerade zu. Es wäre zu wünschen, dass sich Herr Gottsched niemals mit dem Theater vermengt hätte. Seine vermeinten Verbesserungen betreffen entweder entbehrlichen Kleinigkeiten, oder sind wahre Verschlimmerungen.(4)

Such was the beginning of the important Ich-bin-dieser-Niemand letter which appeared in the above-mentioned Briefe on February 16, 1759. With Gottsched's work branded as mere concern over "dispensable details" or "actual alteration for the worse", Lessing proceeds to his opinions on Shakespeare. In the following passage three outstanding pronouncements occur--Shakespeare knew almost nothing of the Ancients, and yet is a far greater tragic poet than Corneille; Corneille stands closer to the Ancients in mechanical arrangement, but Shakespeare is closer in essentials; and after the Oedipus of Sophocles, the tragedies of Shakespeare exert the

(4) Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 41

greatest force upon our passions:

> Auch nach den Muster der Alten die Sache zu entscheiden, ist Shakespear ein weit grösserer tragischer Dichter als Corneille; obgleich dieser die Alten sehr wohl, und jener fast gar nicht gekannt hat. Corneille kömmt ihnen in der mechanischen Einrichtung, und Shakespear in dem Wesentlichen näher. Der Engländer erreicht den Zweck der Tragödie fast immer, so sonderbarer und ihm eigene Wege er auch wählet; und der Franzose erreicht ihn fast niemals, ob er gleich die gebahnten Wege der Alten betritt. Nach dem Oedipus des Sophokles muss in der Welt Kein Stück mehr Gewalt über unsere Leidenschaften haben, als Othello, als König Lear, als Hamlet, usw. (5)

It is to be noted here that Lessing does not say that Shakespeare represents a break with the Ancients, but rather that, without knowing the ancients, he has succeeded in becoming essentially more like them than the classical French, who consciously attempted to imitate them. Lessing is still a classicist, and is justifying his admiration for Shakespeare by trying to show that he was instinctively classical.

The third idea advanced by this letter was that Shakespeare is naturally suited to German taste. He bases his statement upon the similarity which he claims to see between Shakespeare's works and the old German Volksdrama, as illustrated by Dr. Faust.

> Dass aber unsre alten Stücke wirklich sehr viel Englisches gehabt haben, könnte ich ihnen mit geringer Mühe weitläufig beweisen. Nur das bekannteste derselben zu nennen; Doctor Faust hat eine Menge Scenen, die nur ein Shakespearsches Genie zu denken vermögend gewesen. Und wie verliebt war Deutschland, und ist es zum Theil noch, in seinen Doctor Faust! (6)

(5) Ibid., p. 42

(6) Ibid.

The two principal ideas of Lessing about Shakespeare which he has expressed in this letter may be summarized as: 1) Shakespeare has come closer to the Ancients than any other writer, including Corneille; and 2) a likeness exists between Shakespeare's works and the people's drama of Germany. (7) These ideas are important in the later developments of Sturm und Drang, when they are carried out in much more definite form. The French stage becomes despicable when compared with Shakespeare, and the attempt is made to combine German folk-material and the technique of Shakespeare. (8) Actually, Lessing's Letter No. 17 represents as high a point as he attained toward the interpretation of Shakespeare. He did add a few new ideas in later works, but never was able to fully free himself from the belief that, if Shakespeare is good, he must necessarily be classical instinctively. Lessing does, however, contribute the germ ideas and point the way. He relaxed the tone of Shakespeare criticism in Germany by daring to make such a bold assertion against Gottsched. A new era of free-thinking in Shakespearean criticism set in immediately. (9)

(7) Kettner brings out the interesting fact that Young's Conjectures on Original Composition appeared in the same year as Lessing's letter, and that the ideas contained in Young's work are in favor of Shakespeare, but adopt other standpoints than Lessing. These ideas may be summarized: 1) Shakespeare is a genius, a man with an inner godliness which allows him to see nature and man clearly; 2) but only by being original and different from the Ancients (not, as Lessing said, by instinctively following them) does Shakespeare become their equal. Cf. Gustav Kettner, "Lessing und Shakespeare", Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Jeschichte, und deutsche Litteratur, Leipzig, 1907. Vol. XIX, pp. 267-292.

(8) As in the case of Goethe's Götz von Berlichingen.

(9) Lessing himself wrote a play in the style of the English middle-class tragedy during the pre-1759 period. It was his Miss Sara Sampson, patterned largely after Lillo's The London Merchant. Miss Sara Sampson can be termed the first "bürgerliche Trauerspiel" in modern Germany. Cf. Bartels, op. cit., p. 315.

Lessing's co-worker took up the banner shortly afterwards by writing two "Briefe" in the same publication concerning the interpretation and appreciation of Shakespeare. The man referred to is Moses Mendelssohn, whose Letter No. 84 set forth the theory that a poet of Shakespeare's power could present far more incredible scenes to an audience than a lesser writer could, and still create the illusion of reality. "Wen hat es noch je beleidiget, dass die ersten Auftritte im Tempest auf der vollen See in einem Schiffe vorgehen? Wer ist in England noch der incredulus gewesen, der an der Erscheinung des Geistes im Hamlet gezweifelt hätte?"(10) The same idea was carried out in the regard of the unities in Mendelssohn's Letter No. 123 later in the same year (1760). Here he speaks of King Lear as an example of a play in which the unity of time is utterly confused, and yet the audience is completely deluded into acceptance by the mastery of dramatic power. (11) Mendelssohn has said here that Shakespeare succeeds in spite of his fracture of the unities and proprieties only because he is such a great poet. Although he does not say it, the implication remains that he might have been an even better dramatic writer if he had obeyed the unities. Not yet have we an independent anti-classicist.

Until this time German Shakespeare critics have had only one translation of Shakespeare into German on which to base their judements.

(10) Moses Mendelsohn, Briefe, die neueste Litteratur betreffend, Leipzig, 1760. No. 84.

(11) Ibid., No. 123 (August, 1760).

Of course, those who were very familiar with English could always use the originals. However, in order to get the reaction of the whole of educated Germany, something more than von Borck's Julius Caesar was necessary. (12) In the year 1762 the needed project was begun. Christoph Martin Wieland published the first volume of his translation of the complete works of William Shakespeare. (13) The remainder of the eight volumes appeared between then and 1766. In all twenty-two plays were included, with only the first -- A Midsummer Night's Dream -- rendered in verse of the form of the original. All but this play were in prose. If Wieland had not been impelled through some foppery to omit the last scene of this play, it could have stood as his best work. Wieland's accomplishment certainly does not compare with that of Schlegel's at a later date, but it had immense influence. There was little controversy concerning the value of the translations. Wieland himself was a classicist, and saw many failings in Shakespeare's original work. Lessing published a favorable notation about the work in his Hamburgische Dramaturgie; while Christian Felix Weisse, successor to Nicolai as editor of the Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften, had

(12) Beyond von Borck's Caesar, there had been translations of a few scenes of Shakespeare's works, and one very bad anonymous translation of the whole of Romeo & Juliet (in 1758). Von Borck's, however, was the only legitimate complete translation of a play. Cf. Genee, op. cit., p. 95.

(13) Christoph Martin Wieland, Shakespears Theatralische Werke, Zürich, 1763-1766. The preface was a translation of parts of Pope's preface to Shakespeare's works.

several adverse opinions. The latter greatly feared that a Shakespeare-mania would overrun Germany, and that there would be a series of plays attempting to do the same things that Shakespeare did -- like kings becoming mad, grave-diggers chanting songs, and thunder and storms being mixed with witches' dances. (14) Weisse's fears were to some extent fulfilled, but to no detriment of the German drama. The translations by Wieland, however many defects they might have had, were still the sine qua non of Sturm und Drang as far as Shakespeare was concerned.

The first move toward a true adoration of Shakespeare for his own intrinsic qualities regardless of the Ancients was made shortly after the appearance of Wieland's last volume by Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg, writing in his Briefe über Merkwürdigkeiten der Literatur.(15) Nos. 14-18 are on Shakespeare. The first one (no. 14) is the most important to the progress of Shakespeare - criticism in Germany. In it a new standpoint for judgment is propounded for the first time. At last we have a genuine anti-classicist. Shakespeare's works are regarded by this critic as not-to-be-questioned issues from nature itself. Von Gerstenberg's criticism has been termed all enthusiasm and little reason

(14) For a discussion of the acceptance of Wieland's Shakespeare, and its future influence upon German letters, see Ernst Stadler's Wieland's Shakespeare, Strassburg, 1910.

(15) Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg, Briefe über Merkwürdigkeiten der Literatur, Schleswig, 1766-67. Reprint by Alexander von Weilen, Heilbronn, 1890.

by modern critics, and consequently he has not held as high a place as Lessing or some of the later post-Sturm-und-Drangers. The main virtue of von Gerstenberg's work was the fact that he dared to do what none previously had dared - namely, to brush Aristotle completely aside and announce that Shakespeare's was a superior and unrelated kind of art. He said:

> Eine der vornehmsten Ursachen, warum Shakespeare selten, vielleicht niemals, aus dem rechten Gesichtspunkte beurtheilt worden, ist ohne Zweifel der übel angewandte Begriff, den wir vom Drama der Griechen haben. Die wesentlichste Haupt-Absicht einer griechischen Tragödie war, wie Sie wissen, Leidenschaften zu erregen, einer griechischen Comödie, menschliche Handlungen von einer Seite zu zeigen, von der sie zum Lachen reitzten. Dazu kam bei jener die unzertrennliche Idee der Religion, die das was bei uns blos amüsiert, zu gottesdienstlichen Handlung machte, woran der Zuschauer gerade so viel Antheil nahm, als der Acteur: eine kurze Anmerkung, die uns beyläufig die Unschicklichkeit der neuern Chöre erklären könnte. (16)

Thus von Gerstenberg is explaining that the Greek idea of the necessity of the unities existed as an intrinsic part of the age, that the whole Greek dramatic form sprang out of the Zeitgeist as expressed by the religion. Greek tragedy took as its purpose the stirring of the passions; Greek comedy, the production of laughter. Well then, von Gerstenberg

(16) Ibid., p. 112

continues, if this is true, then "Shakespeare's tragedies are no tragedies, his comedies no comedies." To the question - What remains to him if the purposes of the Greek tragedy and comedy are to be denied? -- we get the answer "der Mensch! die Welt! Alles!" But note well, he cautions, "that I do not divorce him from the stirring of the passions, but merely ordain for him a higher purpose which is attained through the sketching of customs, through the careful and accurate imitation of true characters, and through the bold painting of life on the plane of the ideal as well as of the animal." Then appears this man's strongest and most quotable assertion concerning the works of Shakespeare:

> Weg mit der Classification des Drama! Nennen Sie diese plays mit Wielanden, oder mit der Gottschedischen Schule Haupt-und Staats - Actionen, mit den brittischen Kunstrichtern history, tragedy, tragicomedy, comedy, wie Sie wollen: ich nenne Sie lebendige Bilder der sittlichen Natur. (17)

"Living pictures of moral nature," then, becomes von Gerstenberg's characterization of Shakespeare's plays. They are not art in the sense of the Greek's, where the emphasis was upon the stirring of the passions by the presental of a story, usually previously used, in a new and more artistic treatment. The British appellations are not fitting either, because they try to complicate and categorize according to artistic

(17) Ibid., p. 113

arbitrary concepts that which actually issues from a soul completely attuned to nature. No longer is Shakespeare termed the "brother of Socrates" à la Lessing, but he has become the divinely endowed voice of nature, whose work transcends all art in the usual sense. The remainder of von Gerstenberg's criticism continues upon the foundations of this theory, and expands and illustrates. What he has begun, however, Herder later takes it upon himself to endow with reason and to make fit for the realm of true criticism. (18)

Not long after the appearance of von Gerstenberg's Briefe, Lessing saw fit to add a few remarks to his earlier Shakespeare opinions. They appeared in four different numbers of his Hamburgische Dramaturgie in 1767-1768. In No. 11 Lessing presents his famous discussion of the use of ghosts in plays. He mentions Voltaire's justification of his own use of a ghost, and then goes on to show how weakly the Frenchman has illustrated his argument, and how successfully Shakespeare has done it. Whether or not we believe in ghosts in real life, says Lessing, if the dramatist has the power to present his ghost convincingly, we will

(18) It is noteworthy that, in this same work, von Gerstenberg expressed great dissatisfaction with Wieland on the grounds that the translation did not do justice to Shakespeare.

readily believe in ghosts on the stage. Shakespeare has this power. "Before his ghost in Hamlet your hair stands on end, no matter whether it covers a believing or an unbelieving skull." Beside this, Voltaire's ghost of Ninus becomes ridiculous.

> Shakespeares Gespenst kommt wirklich aus jener Welt; so dünkt uns. Denn es kommt zu der feierlichen Stunde, in der schaudernden Stille der Nacht, in der vollen Begleitung aller der düstern, geheimnissvollen Nebenbegriffe, mit welchen wir, von der Amme an, Gespenster zu erwarten und zu denken gewohnt sind. (19)

Against this Voltaire's ghost is a mere clothed comedian which has nothing, says nothing, and does nothing, a ghost that you couldn't even use to frighten children. It comes in the full daylight with most unghostly boldness, and "any old wife could have told him that spirits shun the sunlight, and especially dislike visiting great crowds." (20) In Number 12 of the Dramaturgie the discussion of ghosts continued with the observation that Voltaire's is "nothing but a poetic machine placed there for the sake of the dramatic intrigue; it interests us for its own sake not in the slightest. On the other hand, Shakespeare's ghost is an actual acting character in whose fate we take part; it awakes fear, but also sympathy....Voltaire regards the reappearance of a departed one as

(19) Lessing, Hamburgische Dramaturgie (In Deutsche National-Litteratur, Historisch-kritische Ausgabe von Joseph Kürschner), Berlin, 1889. Vol. LXVII, p. 51

(20) Ibid.

a wonder, Shakespeare as a completely natural occurrence." (21) Again he disparages a quality of Voltaire in Number 15, where the discussion concerns the presentation of love on the stage. "Die Liebe selbst hat Voltairen die 'Zayre' diktiert, sagt ein Kunstrichter artig genug. Richtiger hätte er gesagt: die Galanterie. Ich kenne nur eine Tragödie, an der die Liebe selbst arbeiten helfen, und das ist 'Romeo und Juliet', vom Shakespeare." Lessing concludes this article with a few remarks about the Wieland translation of Shakespeare. He feels that there are obvious defects in Wieland's work, but that, were the translator anyone else, there would have been more. (22) Lessing's final remarks on Shakespeare appear in the 73rd. part of the Dramaturgie, where, as a follow-up on Felix Christian Weisse's claim that he had not plagiarized Shakespeare in the preparation of his original Richard der Dritte in 1768, Lessing expresses the opinion that Shakespeare could not possibly be imitated to the extent of plagiarism. "Aber was man von dem Homer gesagt hat: es lasse sich dem Herkules eher seiner Keule, als ihm ein Vers abringen--das lässt sich vollkommen auch vom Shakespeare sagen. Auf die geringste von seinen Schönheiten ist ein Stempel gedruckt, welcher gleich der ganzen Welt zuruf: ich bin Shakespeares! und wehe der fremden Schönheit, die das Herz hat, sich neben ihr zu stellen!" (23)

(21) Ibid., p. 55

(22) Ibid., p. 73 ff.

(23) Ibid., p. 332

Lessing advises the use of Shakespeare as a guide, however. Weisse had claimed to have made acquaintance with Shakespeare's Richard the Third only when his own work was near completion. Had that been the case with me, Lessing states, "then I would at least have afterwards employed Shakespeare's work as a mirror in order to brush from my work all those spots which my eye would not have been immediately capable of recognizing in it." (24)

This later thinking of Lessing on Shakespeare is interesting, but does not actually further the course of Shakespearean criticism in Germany. Now, as we leave Lessing for the last time, we still see him as a classicist who is satisfied with his theory that Shakespeare is great because he is instinctively Aristotelian. He has failed to keep up with the younger generation's idea that Shakespeare is something beyond and above the Ancients. Yet his contribution to the interpretation of Shakespeare is perhaps the greatest of all the Germans' except Schlegel's. His few words in the revolutionary "Ich-bin-das-Niemand" letter were worth more than most of the multi-page tracts which flowed from the pens of lesser and more specialized personalities. Even Goethe's famous notations on Shakespeare are of less overall importance

(24) Ibid., p. 333

than Lessing's. Lessing was the trailblazer, the man who broke Gottsched's firm hold over German criticism and letters in general. For that, if for no more, he deserves recognition as one of the greatest names in German literature and thought, especially in the forwarding of a more rational and more just judgment of William Shakespeare.

Largely out of the enthusiasm of von Gerstenberg, reacted upon by the conservatism of Lessing, grew the Shakespearean criticism of Johann Gottfried Herder. Herder, who has been termed the "German Rousseau" (25), had a modest amount of literary talent himself, but a superior ability to appreciate and interpret the work of others. His travels in France and Holland, and his acquaintanceship with Lessing and Goethe, placed him in personal contact with all the leading trends of Continental literature. His philosophy of history--which he acquired in part from Rousseau and Lessing--served him in good stead in his writing on Shakespeare. He looked upon history as a chain of cause and effect, a process of evolution, but carried the concept further with the idea that the human race and human culture are progressing inevitably toward an ideal humanism. (26)

Von Gerstenberg's idea that Shakespeare was beyond the pale of Aristotelian rules was acceptable to Herder, but the idea that Shakespeare represented a new and unique species whose work was ruled

(25) "Herder ist die deutsche Parallelerscheinung zu Rousseau." Bartels, op. cit., vol. I, p. 407.

(26) George Madison Priest, The Classical Period of German Literature, Princeton, 1941, pp. 92-93.

only by nature in the universal sense seemed to Herder to require qualification. From 1769 to 1772 Herder made a deep study of all the Shakespeare material at hand. He began his comments on Shakespeare, which appeared in 1773 in the publication Von deutscher Art und Kunst (27), by applying his theory of historical evolution to the technique of the drama. He showed that Shakespeare would naturally differ from the Greeks in his response to dramatic rules. Evolution changes everything. The 'Zeitgeist' of ancient Greece was not that of modern England. "In Griechenland entstand das Drama, wie es in Norden nicht entstehen konnte. In Griechenland wars, was es in Norden nicht seyn kann. In Norden ist es also nicht und darf nicht seyn, was es in Griechenland gewesen. Also Sophokles Drama und Shakespears Drama sind zwey Dinge, die in gewissem Betracht kaum den Namen gemein haben." (28) Herder goes on to declare that all the simplicity of Greek plots, the Greek modesty of manner and expression, of music and staging, the unities of time and place--all these were, without art or magic, so naturally and essentially a part of the Greek tragedy that no tragedy would then have been possible without observing these factors. (29) Greek tragedy, Herder shows, was even in its heyday on the path toward the complications of modernity. "They (the Greeks) did not simplify, I believe, but they added complications: Aeschylus added to the chorus, Sophocles to Aeschylus, and one need only

(27) Johann Gottfried Herder, "Shakespear", Von deutscher Art und Kunst, Hamburg, 1773, pp. 53-80.

(28) Ibid., p. 55.

(29) Ibid.

consider the most artistic pieces by Sophocles, and compare his greatest masterpiece, the Oedipus in Thebes, with the Prometheus, or with the reports of the old dithyramb, in order to see the astonishing amount of art that he succeeded in assembling there. But never is it an art which makes unity out of complexity, but an art that expands unity into multiplicity--a beautiful labyrinth of scenes." (30) Herder then moves forward to a statement of his theory of mutation. All must change according to the nature of the times. The attempts of the French from Corneille to Voltaire to produce a classical tragedy have been unsuccessful. Although they have produced the ultimate that is producable in that direction, still they have failed. Racine is the closest approach to classical perfection of technique, but he, like Voltaire, missed the attainment of the true purpose of drama. That purpose is not to present a stageworthy interplay of pretty conversation, but to arouse the feelings of pity and fear. Thus the French, who have disparaged Shakespeare, have failed to attain the dramatic essence which he has attained. (31)

Drama must, according to Herder, grow out of the life of the people among whom it flourishes. It must rise naturally out of the history, traditions, customs, religion, temperament, language, and time-spirit of the folk. In all these, England lies far away from Greece.

(30) Ibid., p. 57.

(31) Ibid., pp. 58-62.

"Dass da (in England), und zu der und vor der Zeit kein Griechenland war, wird kein 'pullulus Aristoteles' läugnen, und hier und da also griechisches Drama zu fordern, dass es natürlich (wir reden von keiner Nachäffung) entstehe, ist ärger, als dass ein Schaaf Löwen gebären solle." (32) To expect England to bear a Greek drama is an incongruous as to expect a sheep to give birth to lions. Although Herder is usually a balanced critic, he can at times rise to the heights of pure eulogy, as in the following passage: "O Aristotle, if you should appear, how you would homerize the new Sophocles! You would formulate that special theory concerning him that, until now, his countrymen Hume and Hurd, Pope and Johnson have not formulated!.... You would say to Sophocles: paint the sacred leaf of this altar! and you, o Nordic bard, all the sides and walls of this temple in your immortal frescoes!" (33) Still in the vein of eulogy, Herder adds to his description of the power of Shakespeare's plays. "Wie vor einem Meere von Begebenheiten, wo Wogen in Wogen rauschen, so tritt vor seine Bühne."

In the discussion of Shakespeare's breach of the unities of place and time, Herder gives his opinion that the usual classical concept is non-essential and even erroneous. Since drama is in essence a process of illusion (Täuschung), then why is it not in the writer's favor if he is able to deceive you into believing that time has sped by

(32) Ibid., p. 62 - (Cf. von Gerstenberg's ideas.)

(33) Ibid., p. 64.

faster than in truth it has? "Sollte es denn jemand in der Welt brauchen demonstrirt zu werden, dass Raum und Zeit eigentlich an sich nichts, dass sie die relativeste Sache auf Dasein, Handlung, Leidenschaft, Gedankenfolge und Maass der Aufmerksamkeit in oder ausserhalb der Seele sind?" (34) Thus Herder is pleading that the art of the dramatist includes this very illusion of time and place, that the chronological minutes in our lives can seem long or short in accordance with our psychic state, and that where we are is where we think we are. It is not true that Sophocles was more artful or less artful than Shakespeare. "Sophocles remained true to nature when he employed a treatment of one place and one time; Shakespeare could remain true to it only when he flung his great world-events and the fates of humanity out through all places and all times." (35)

What has Herder actually done with the material of von Gerstenberg? He has justified it in the light of a broad critical knowledge; he has shown that it fits naturally into his concept of history as an ever-ascending evolutionary process. In short, he has turned von Gerstenberg's somewhat intuitive idea into genuine authoritative criticism. (36) He has done even more; he has introduced the almost world-shaking movement of Sturm und Drang.

In the above work on Shakespeare, Herder expressed a wish that

(34) Ibid., p. 72

(35) Ibid., p. 71

(36) Cf. Bernhard Suphan, "Herder an Gerstenberg über Shakespeare", Vierteljahrschrift für Litteraturgeschichte, Weimar, 1889. Vol. II, pp. 446-465.

his young friend (meaning Goethe), in whom he had so much confidence, would create something soon under the inspiration of Shakespeare which would set the literary world afire. That same year the desired work was forthcoming. Goethe produced the first original modern German work in which the unities were purposely cast aside, and in which there was a conscious attempt to reproduce the extravagancies of Shakespeare. It was Goetz von Berlichingen. Goethe had made his first remarks about Shakespeare, however, a couple of years earlier in his enthusiastic oration, Zum Schäkespears Tage (1771). Here he had expressed his almost overwhelming feeling of joy after the first meeting with a work of the Englishman. "Die erste Seite, die ich in ihm las, machte mich auf Zeitlebens ihm eigen, und wie ich mit dem ersten Stücke fertig war, stund ich wie ein Blindgeborner, dem eine Wunderhand das Gesicht in einem Augenblicke schenkt." (37) He tells of his elation over the fact that, in Shakespeare, the world at last has a liberator from dramatic rules. He sees a new world of possibilities opening up before him. The attempts of the French to produce a Greek drama have resulted in mere parodies, he claims. Goethe feels that in Shakespeare we have the voice of true nature. At this time Goethe has nothing but limitless praise and adoration for Shakespeare: (38) "Shakespeare, mein Freund, wenn du noch

(37) Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Zum Shakespears Tage (In Das Oxforder Buch Deutscher Prosa, herausgegeben von H. G. Fiedler), Oxford, 1943, p. 167.

(38) Ibid., pp. 167-169.

unter uns wärest, ich könnte nirgend leben als mit dir, wie gern wollt ich die Nebenrolle eines Pylades spielen, wenn du Orest wärst, lieber als die geehrwürdigte Person eines Oberpriesters im Tempel zu Delphos."(39) When one considers sentiments like these, it was almost inevitable that, even without Herder's suggestion, Geothe should try something patterned after Shakespeare.

Goetz von Berlichingen appeared in 1773, and immediately its merits, and its relation to Shakespeare, were recognized. It is a plot out of Germany's "Ritterzeit", the story of the fight against tyrannical oppression waged by the famed Goetz-with-the-iron-hand. In it are many scenes of most unclassical violence, and a Shakespearean tone of the mysterious as illustrated by the session of the secret tribunal of the Feme-Gericht. This was Goethe's most eloquent contribution to Sturm und Drang--not a piece of criticism, but an original work. (40)

Shortly after Herder's Shakespear and Goethe's Goetz, the works of two other men, Reinhold Lenz and Maximilian von Klinger, impelled the full flowering of Sturm und Drang. Lenz's first work on Shakespeare appeared in connection with his translation of Love's Labours Lost. It was entitled Anmerkungen übers Theater nebst

(39) Johann W. von Geothe, Werke, Weimar, 1896. Vol. XXXVII, p. 132

(40) Cf. Goethe, Götz von Berlichingen

angehängtem übersetztem Stuck Shakespeares, Amor vincit omnia.(41) In it he praised Shakespeare's improprieties of treatment. "His language," said Lenz, "is the language of the boldest genius, which roots up earth and heaven in order to find expression for the thoughts which come streaming in to him." He has created a theater for all humanity, at which each one "stops, is amazed, is overjoyed, and then finds himself again, from the lowest to the highest." He has dared to mingle the high with the low.(42) What Lenz here praised, he also put into practice in his own work, and to some extent in his own life. Born in Russian Livonia, and already victim of three unhappy love affairs, he came to Weimar in 1776. There he displayed the inconsistent mode of life that forced him to withdraw from the duchy, and which reveals itself in his distorted imitation of Shakespeare, the play Die Soldaten (1776). Confused scene-changing, incoherent action, and misleading anti-climaxes reveal the actual growth of that which a few lovers of Shakespeare, Herder and Lessing among them, had feared--namely, the overenthusiastic exaggeration of the Shakespearean dramatic techniques.

In a class similar to Lenz, but somewhat more conservative and consistent, stands Klinger. (43) He was not a critic, but a creative

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(41) J. M. R. Lenz, Anmerkungen übers Theater, Leipzig, 1774.

(42) Genee, op. cit., pp. 128-130.

(43) Cf. Priest, op. cit., pp. 134-143.

writer. His play Der Wirrwarr, his maddest and most famous work, is the "Romeo-and-Juliet" idea set in two feuding families in America. Like the play above by Lenz, this work also appeared in 1776. Soon it was renamed Sturm und Drang, and as such gave its name to the whole wild period, the narrow bounds of which extended from 1773 to 1781. (44)

The remainder of the period of Sturm und Drang holds little in the way of genuine Shakespeare criticism, but a great deal in the way of actual presentation of Shakespearean works. Eschenburg's twelve volume retranslation of the Wieland Shakespeare appeared between the years 1775 and 1777. It stirred no great furor, although it did give rise to a rather scathing opinion by Christian Felix Weisse. (45) He insisted that this translation of Shakespeare would inspire such extravagancies that it would set German literature back ten years. (46) Also in this period began the series of adaptations of Shakespeare by F. L. Schröder. Hamlet was the first, presented in Hamburg in 1776. Later came Measure for Measure (1777), Macbeth (1777), King Lear (1778), Richard the Second (1778), Henry the Fourth (1778), with repeats on the

(44) Actually, however, the period of Sturm und Drang stretches, with lesser manifestations, from 1767 (Herder's first statements of its principles) to 1787 (Schiller's Don Carlos, the last work revealing strong elements of the period.)

(45) See part of this paper dealing with Wieland's translations for Weisse's criticism of them.

(46) See Genee, op. cit., p. 135.

performances in later years. Other well known adaptors were Fischer and Bürger. (47)

The years between Herder's Shakespear in 1773, and the classicism and the dawning romanticism of the nineties, were filled with manifestations of Shakespearean influence, but comparatively empty of interpretive critical work. All of Schiller's dramas show signs of Shakespearean technique; and certainly the works of Goethe, even after he had evolved his new theory of classicism, owe something to the poet's early occupation with Shakespeare. Since, in this part of this paper, the concern is with criticism, the individual cases of Shakespearean influence will not be treated. When we again take up the Shakespeare trend, it is in the novel Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, by Goethe.

The young Goethe had expressed his feelings for Shakespeare in Zum Shakespears Tage back in 1771. Between then and the time of Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre he produced Goetz von Berlichingen, and then passed through Sturm und Drang to fall back on his new idea of classicism. The famous interpretation of the character of Hamlet in Wilhelm Meister contains autobiographical possibilities. Wilhelm, rhapsodising upon Hamlet, bears similarities to the Goethe of 1771. Into this famous passage of fiction Goethe put the fruits of a long acquaintance with Shakespeare.

(47) Cf. the repertoire lists in Genee, op. cit., pp. 237 ff.

The opinions which he expressed have not survived unaltered in modern criticism, but they were a milestone along the roadway. Herewith is presented a summary of the principal parts of the critique. (48)

Concerning the characters of Shakespeare in general, Goethe says: "His men appear like natural men, and yet they are not. These, the most mysterious and complex productions of creation, here act before us as if they were watches, whose dial plates and cases were of crystal, which pointed out, according to their use, the course of the hours and minutes; while at the same time you could discern the combination of wheels and springs that turned them." (49) Goethe (through his character Wilhelm) continues with a close analysis of Hamlet. Hamlet was reared for the life of a prince. He was innately good, an admirer of the arts, a lover of truth and a jovial scorner of falsehood, a man upon whom the affect of university life was visible at court, neither ambitious nor lazy. His taste was noble, and he desired to rule if ruling were to be his destiny. His emotional life was purely and wholesomely filled with his love for Ophelia.

But then Hamlet lost his father, and saw the throne go to his uncle. Still his peace of mind was not disrupted. The throne had not been strictly hereditary. And moreover, he still had his mother, who

(48) Although this critique belongs in the field of specialized, rather than general, criticism, it was thought wise to include a summary here because of the outstanding fame of the passage.

(49) Goethe, Literary Essays (A selection in English arranged by J. E. Spingarn), New York, 1921, p. 146.

represented for him a tie with the nobility of the past, and especially of his father. But then, when she married his uncle, she was also lost to him. He alone became the upholder of his family's honor and tradition as he saw it. That too was bearable, even though he became like a beggar in his own habitat.

The great blow fell, however, with the appearance of his father's spirit. There in the frightening night the moral basis upon which his life, however miserable it had become, was founded was shot suddenly from under him. "--die schrecklichste Anklage wider seinen Oheim ertönt in seinen Ohren, Aufforderung zur Rache und die dringende wiederholte Bitte: Erinnere dich meiner! Und da der Geist verschwunden ist, wen sehen wir vor uns stehen? Einen jungen Helden, der nach Rache schnaubt? Einen gebornen Fürsten, der sich glücklich fühlt gegen den Usurpator seiner Krone aufgefordert zu werden? Nein!" (50) No, we do not see a young man bent on revenge on any grounds. We see astonishment and anxiety drop upon the man standing alone. We hear the words which Goethe says are the key to the whole character of Hamlet: "The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,--That ever I was born to set it right!" Out of this grows the well-known 'oak-tree-in-a-costly-jar' interpretation:

> ....mir ist deutlich, dass Shakespeare habe schildern wollen eine grosse Tat auf eine Seele gelegt, die der Tat nicht gewachsen ist. Und in diesem Sinne find' ich

(50) Goethe, Hamlet, in Oxforder Buch deutscher Prosa, Oxford, 1941.

> das Stück durchgängig gearbeitet. Hier wird ein Eichbaum in ein köstliches Gefäss gepflanzt, das nur liebliche Blumen in seinen Schoss hätte aufnehmen sollen; die Wurzeln dehnen sich aus, das Gefäss wird zernichtet. (51)

It is the analogy about an oak tree planted in a costly jar, the roots of which expand and split the jar. The jar was fitted only to bear delicate flowers. Hamlet is burdened with an action for which his soul is not fitted. (52)

Perhaps this represents the high point in Goethe's work on Shakespeare. The remainder came late, and is much lower in tone. In 1812 Goethe presented his adaptation of Romeo and Juliet. As if in apology for his doings, he wrote in 1815 a tract entitled Shakespeare und kein Ende. In it he does not by any means disparage Shakespeare, but his opinions are much more conservative. First, he takes up Shakespeare as a poet in general. In this category he finds that Shakespeare's greatest power results not from his concrete realism and truth to nature, but rather from his faculty for speaking to our inner senses. Shakespeare's works contain more of spiritual truth than of spectacular action. Each of Shakespeare's plays has an all-pervading idea of an ethical or moral nature. For instance, Antony and Cleopatra expresses the idea that pleasure and action are forever incompatible.(53) When Shakespeare is compared with the Ancients, Goethe holds, an enormous

(51) Ibid., p. 186

(52) Cf. Goethe, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, 1795.

(53) Goethe, Literary Essays (arranged by Spingarn), pp. 174-178.

gulf is visible. Yet, neither is Shakespeare a modern poet of the romantic school. He is in truth naturalistic, concerned with the things of this world. But still he has been successful in uniting the extremes of the ancient drama with some of the factors of the modern. The overwhelming fate of the ancients is true to the course of existence. The moderns like to lay stress upon the freedom of the will. Shakespeare has put the two trends together so that fate always predominates, but will nevertheless has a stronger part in the struggle than is true in the case of ancient drama. Shakespeare, says Goethe, was religiously minded but had no set creed. (54)

Thus far Goethe has been largely in favor of Shakespeare, but in the final section of the essay, where he discusses Shakespeare as a playwright, the tone changes. Here Goethe denies that Shakespeare was a genius in the theatrical art. He produces the ultimate of epic and drama, but he does not produce good plays. His leading talent is that of the interpreter, the "Epitomator". "It would be only falsehood - and in no sense is this to his dishonor - were we to say that the stage was a worthy field for his genius." (55) Concerning Romeo and Juliet, Goethe is especially critical of the comic elements provided by the nurse and Mercutio. These farcical interludes, he feels, "must be as unbearable to the minds of the lovers on the stage as they are to us (the audience)". In conclusion, Goethe tears apart the idea that Shakespeare must be

(54) Ibid., pp. 178-184.

(55) Ibid., p. 186

produced on the stage exactly as he wrote it. He feels that Schröder's success in adapting Shakespeare arises from the fact that he corrected Shakespeare's errors, left out the improper scenes, and stressed the stage affect above all. In Goethe's opinion, Shakespeare is better as a closet dramatist than on the stage. (56)

One who knew the old Goethe of 1771 (Zum Shakespeares Tage) or of 1773 (Götz von Berlichingen) would almost be startled at the change.(57) The man who would have been willing to play the part of a Pylades to the great English writer now has the almost Gottschedian audacity to declare his works unstageworthy in the original. (Possibly Goethe was not satisfied with the result of an attempted Shakespeare-imitation in Goetz.) With age, Goethe has become classical. He has evolved his new theory of modified classicism, and according to it, Shakespeare demands too much of the imagination. Goethe, who in his youth gave romanticism a powerful prod, has now, in the age of dawning romanticism, reversed his former stand, or at least greatly modified it. This essay, written in the years between 1813-15, represents the last general articulation on Shakespeare by Goethe, and probably expresses his ideas from the 1790's to the end of his life in 1832. Also of note side by side with Goethe's classicism, is the attitude of Schiller toward Shakespeare. The works of this friend of Goethe always displayed a great deal of Shakespearean influence (58), but in two of his Shakespearean adaptations - Macbeth in

(56) Ibid., pp. 184-189.

(57) Cf. Heinrich Düntzer, "Shakespeare und der junge Goethe", Zur Goetheforschung, Stuttgart, 1891, pp. 381-436.

(58) Cf. Johann Engel, Spuren Shakespeares in Schillers dramatischen Werken, Magdeburg, 1901.

1800 and Othello in 1805--we find evidence of a classicism similar to that of Goethe. (59)

With Goethe's latest remarks we have moved to the limits of this treatment along one branch, the branch of the classical interlude after Sturm und Drang. But against the trends of the expanding romanticism in all Western Europe, this branch cannot help being a dead end. This comparison is truly not completely apt, however, for Goethe's pronouncements always exercised an influence. But the trend toward a classicism could not develop any higher after the romantic fervor set in. After, or rather concurrent with, Goethe, we find the final flowering of Shakespeare-criticism in Germany. Only three names are worthy of major mention as critics during the remainder of the period under treatment--Ludwig Tieck, Friedrich Schlegel, and August Wilhelm Schlegel. The work of the first two is of importance largely because it leads the way up to August Wilhelm Schlegel's crowning achievement of translation and criticism.

(59) Genee, op. cit., p. 298 and p. 301.

CHAPTER THREE

Climax of German Shakespeare Criticism in the Early Romantics and in A. W. Schlegel.

At this point we enter what is usually called the period of romantic criticism of Shakespeare. It is in part the outgrowth of Sturm und Drang, but it goes far beyond a mere Shakespeare-mania. It is appreciation united with scholarship. All of the previous critical works in the field enter into the formation of this romantic criticism. The question of whether Shakespeare is injurious or beneficial to German letters becomes minor. Neither is the main concern how Germany can improve her own dramatic art by a study of Shakespeare. It is a period of Shakespeare - study for its own sake. Two other critics are of importance in the period previous to A. W. Schlegel's Vorlesungen Über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur (1809-11)-- Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich Schlegel. Their importance in this early period, however, springs less from the breadth of their work on the subject, than from the fact that they, along with A. W. Schlegel, are laying the foundations for this mature form of criticism. Tieck later linked his name more strongly with Shakespeare when he undertook the completion of the translation of Shakespeare which August Schlegel had left unfinished.

In the year 1796, just after Goethe's critique of Hamlet in Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, two more critical works were published dealing with Shakespeare from the standpoint of this mature epoch. August Wilhelm Schlegel published an article in Schiller's journal, Die Horen, entitled "Etwas über William Shakespeare bei Gelegenheit Wilhelm Meisters." Thus, although Goethe himself turned classical and did not carry out the trend as indicated by his Hamlet criticism, he nevertheless can be looked upon as giving a strong lift to romantic Shakespearean criticism by his younger efforts. This work by Schlegel is not of special importance when compared with the later Vorlesungen, but it represents the start of his career. In the article, Schlegel expresses his approval of Goethe's work, but makes the observation that the excellence of this criticism by Wilhelm Meister injects a grain of inconsistency into Goethe's novel. The grade of Wilhelm's remarks is too much to expect from the character as Goethe has presented him up to that point. Schlegel goes on to present his own general opinions and to expand on Goethe's material. (1) August Schlegel's work on Shakespeare assumes somewhat greater importance, as we shall note, in his work on Romeo and Juliet one year later.

That same year Ludwig Tieck published his first remarks on Shakespeare, which he claims to have written some three years earlier. This criticism was attached to his translation of Shakespeare's

(1) August Wilhelm Schlegel, "Etwas über William Shakespeare bei Gelegenheit Wilhelm Meisters", Die Horen, Tübingen, 1796. Part IV, pp. 57-112.

Tempest. (2) He begins with a mention of the accusations against Shakespeare as a rule-breaker. His words are typically romantic on this subject. Those who stress the breaking of rules as a defect, says Tieck, fail to take into consideration the fact that Shakespeare makes the breaking of rules unnoticeable by the power of his illusion. According to Tieck, this is part of the accomplishment of dramatic writing. (3) "Denn eben darin besteht der Probirstein des echten Genies, dass es für jede verwegene Fiction, für jede ungewöhnliche Vorstellungsart schon im voraus die Täuschung des Zuschauers zu gewinnen weiss; dass der Dichter nicht unsere Gemüthigkeit in Anspruch nimmt, sondern die Phantasie, selbst wider unsern Willen, so spannt, dass wir die Regeln der Aesthetik, mit allen Begriffen unsers aufgeklärteren Jahrhunderts vergessen, und uns ganz dem schönen Wahnsinn des Dichters überlassen; dass sich die Seele, nach dem Rausch, willig der Bezauberung von neuem hingibt und die spielende Phantasie durch keine plötzliche und widrige Überraschung aus ihren Träumen geweckt wird." (4) The great dramatist like Shakespeare does not take our state of mind into account, but so expands the fancy that, even against our wills, we forget the rules of art with all the other ideas of our enlightened century, and give ourselves up to the poet's beautiful illusion. We saw the bud of this idea in the early days of Sturm und Drang; now it is here to remain. Only to Shakespeare,

(2) Ludwig Tieck, Der Sturm, Ein Schauspiel von Shakespeare für das Theater bearbeitet. Nebst einer Abhandlung über Shakespeares Behandlung des Wunderbaren, Berlin, 1796.

(3) Compare this with Herder's similar belief twenty-five years earlier.

(4) Ludwig Tieck, Kritische Schriften, Leipzig, 1848. Vol. I, pp. 37-38.

however, is the gift to bewitch us completely into his work given. "Die grosse Alchymie, durch die alles, was er berührte, in Gold verwandelt ward, scheint mit ihm verloren." (5) Those who have made the attempt to follow in Shakespeare's footsteps have invariably failed, says Tieck. "Despite their secret formulae, despite their circles and their magic apparatus, no spirits obeyed, and in the end they only were successful in producing boredom because they did not possess the art of putting the critical understanding to sleep". (6) Shakespeare did not make the mistake which was so common of using supernatural events from the Ancients. Wisely, he chose them from the traditions of his own people.(7)

The method by which Shakespeare attained the proper illusion for his supernatural beings is taken up at length with the discussion based largely on The Tempest, and partly on A Midsummer Night's Dream. Four principal phases are visible in Shakespeare's technique in this respect, Tieck finds. First, he presents a complete world of wonders in which the fancy can dwell without disruption of the effect by everyday reality; and yet he does it in such a way that the presented wonders are not impossible to understand. Second, he strengthens his illusion by the many-sidedness of his presentation, and by the artful amelioration of effect. Third, he employs comical elements even in his fairyland. And fourth, he makes use of the illusory effect of music. (8)

(5) Ibid., p. 38.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Ibid., p. 39.

(8) Ibid., pp. 44-62.

Concerning Shakespeare's employment of the supernatural in tragedy, Tieck notes three differences. The tragic spirit-world is placed farther from us, and is more mysterious and more difficult to understand; there is previous preparation for the supernatural events which occur; and the poet almost always allows the possibility for a natural explanation of the supernatural occurrences of tragedy. (9) Such is the essence of Tieck's criticism of Shakespeare before Schlegel's Vorlesungen. (10) By 1800 he had written a few other miscellaneous remarks which he gathered for publication at a later date. They are actually random notes rather than organized criticism, however, and are outside our sphere of interest here. (11)

In Tieck we have a good sample, then, of romantic critical method. He adopts the stand that Shakespeare's inimitable dramatic power places him above the pale of rules. He goes on then to show evidence of close, scholarly scrutiny similar to that found in the Shakespearean analysts of the nineteenth century in Germany. His work on the supernatural elements in Shakespeare retains its value even to the present. (12)

(9) Ibid., pp. 62-74.

(10) A. W. Schlegel's Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur, 1811, has been chosen as the concluding point of this paper.

(11) These notes appear in Tieck's Kritische Schriften (1848) under the title "Briefe über Shakespeare" - (Vol. I, pp. 133-185).

(12) Cf. N. Delius, Die Tieck'sche Shakespeare-Kritik, Bonn, 1846.

In the year 1797 the two Schlegels, Carl Wilhelm Friedrich and August Wilhelm, added to the fund of romantic Shakespeare-criticism. Friedrich published his Griechen und Römer; (13) and August, his article, "Ueber Shakespeares Romeo und Julia". (14)

Discussing Hamlet in Griechen und Römer, F. Schlegel sees a definite coherence underlying the whole play. He claims that Shakespeare's dramas all have the virtue of coherence, and especially Hamlet. The difficulty arises from the artfulness with which Shakespeare has hidden the links. Everything in Hamlet is essential and connected. The key to the play, says Schlegel, is Hamlet's character. But his interpretation of Hamlet's character is not exactly the same as Goethe's. Goethe saw Hamlet as a being too weak to withstand the burden dropped upon him, a costly jar with an oak tree planted in it. Schlegel finds Hamlet a man whose active powers are lost through a concentration of all his energies in his mind. As Goethe would have us believe, Hamlet knew what he should do, but could not do it. Schlegel says that Hamlet's tragic inaction results not from inability to carry out his duty, but from inability to set his mind definitely upon the course of action demanded of him. Hamlet's mind is split and battered in the effort to decide on a valid

(13) Carl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel, Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und Römer, Neustrelitz, 1797.

(14) August Wilhelm Schlegel, "Ueber Shakespeares Romeo und Julia", Die Horen, Tübingen, 1797. Part VI, pp. 18-48.

course of action. Thus the disunity of Hamlet's mind is the key which brings about the coherence of all the disunities of the play. Schlegel seems to be saying that the theme of Hamlet is disunity.

Shakespeare combined romanticism, medievalism, and modernism in his work. That he is not limited by rules is an erroneous statement. He is not limited by classical rules, it is true, but his dramas have a technique which is their own. (15) All classes respond to his productions In Shakespeare's works there is no special phase of life that is treated or rejected. The beautiful is accompanied in his works by the ugly—not that his works are entirely objective, but that they are cross-sectional at least. Often Shakespeare is one sided, but usually his one sidedness is in favor of the almost incontestable viewpoint (at least as he presents it). (16) Ralli is correct in adjudging the Hamlet section of Friedrich Schlegel's criticism the best part of his work. His general criticism is not of the enduring nature of Tieck's, or to mention earlier writers, of Herder's or Lessing's.

Also in 1797, as mentioned above, August Wilhelm Schlegel offered his first big piece of Shakespearean criticism concerning Romeo and Juliet. (17) It is the first major piece of German Shakespeare - criticism in which there is a concern with sources. As such it marks

(15) Here again we have a survival and an amplification of Herder's opinion regarding Shakespeare and dramatic rules.

(16) The material from Friedrich Schlegel has been rerendered here from the treatment by Ralli in A History of Shakespearean Criticism (London, 1932), in lieu of the unavailable original of Schlegel's Griechen und Römer.

(17) A. W. Schlegel, "Uber Shakespeares Romeo und Julia", Die Horen, Tübingen, 1797. Part VI, pp. 18-48.

the beginning of the great period of Shakespeare scholarship which pervaded the nineteenth century. Schlegel tells us that the Romeo-and-Juliet story first appears in a work by the Italian writer Bandello, and that it was used previous to Shakespeare's time in another English play entitled Romeus and Juliet. (18) Ascending from the investigatory level, Schlegel then goes on with some interesting interpretive material, most of which was presented later in his general Shakespearean criticism. One passage shows his disagreement with the numerous attempts to change Shakespeare's original, especially Romeo and Juliet. The adaptation which he mentions, by which the play is given a happy ending, was common during the eighteenth century. The other was less common. He says: "Man hat gefunden, Shakespeare habe die Gelegenheit zu einer sehr pathetischen Scene versäumt, indem er Julien nicht vor Romeo's Tode, in dem Augenblicke wie er das Gift genommen, erwachen lässt. Grosse Erfindung hätte nicht zu dieser Abänderung gehört, eben so wenig als zu dem entgegengesetzten Auswege, dass Julia erwacht, ehe er noch seinen Tod entschieden hat, und alles glucklich endigt. Indessen scheint mir Shakespeare, sey es aus Treue gegen die Erzählung, welche er zunächst vor sich hätte, oder aus überlegter Wahl, das Bessere getroffen zu haben." (19) Schlegel feels that Shakespeare has chosen the correct outcome for the tragedy in the light of the development of events. Neither the greater opportunity for action afforded by the awakening of Juliet after Romeo has taken the poison but before his death, nor the

(18) Ibid., pp. 18 ff.

(19) Ibid., pp. 41-42.

happy outcome resulting from her awakening in time to stop his drinking of the poison, are proper to the story as presented by Shakespeare.

Also from the year 1797 dates the start of his famous translations of Shakespeare's plays. At that time, as professor at the University of Jena, August Schlegel was in close association with his brother Friedrich, and with Ludwig Tieck; and the works, mentioned previously, of these two men and of August all sprang from the inspiration of the romantic quartette of the two Schlegels, Tieck, and Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg). (20) The work of translating Shakespeare was pursued throughout the first decade of the nineteenth century. It was a conscientious piece of work carried out by a linguistic and literary genius. Not only did he strive for, and attain, accuracy of meaning, but he also followed the rhyme and metrical pattern of the original, and even achieved for the most part the same word-tone. No translations into any language have ever reproduced Shakespeare so faithfully as these works of Schlegel. Nine volumes had made their appearance up to 1810. Despite the kind reception which they received, Schlegel gave up the work at that point with several plays not yet translated. Later, when a new edition of the work was desired in 1825, Schlegel surrendered the work of revision and translation of the remaining plays to his friend Tieck. Although the work of Tieck is not to be disparaged, it nevertheless is almost a universal opinion that he

(20) From the prefatory memoir of A. W. Schlegel in Schlegel's Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature (Translated by John Black and revised by A. J. W. Morrison), London, 1883, p. 9.

fell far below the level of Schlegel. (21)

What Schlegel accomplished in the realm of translation, he duplicated in that of criticism. In the year 1808 he delivered a course of lectures in Vienna treating the field of art and literature. They were published shortly afterwards under the title Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur. (22) Six of the lectures are devoted to an interpretation of Shakespeare. In them is contained the essence of the romantic criticism of the English poet, and the opinions of Schlegel represent the peak of the trend which had been in progress ever since Gottsched's attack in 1741. Schlegel was familiar with all the critical work which had gone before, in England and France as well as in Germany. He knew all the Shakespeare problems and controversies, and had formed his own opinions about them. He was as familiar with Shakespeare's works as any man in the world. In addition, he was an authority on all literatures from the Ancient Greek to modern times.

First to be considered in Schlegel's interpretation is the fact that he is a romanticist, and represents the viewpoint of the most enlightened romantic criticism of his day. His dissertation on Shakespeare begins with a summary of the difference between classical literature and romantic literature, and an explanation of why the latter is superior. The heart of the ancient art was order; of romantic art,

(21) Cf. Genee, A. W. Schlegel und Shakespeare. Ein Beitrag zur Würdigung der Schlegel'schen Übersetzungen, Berlin, 1903.

(22) A. W. Schlegel, Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur, Heidelberg, 1809-1811.

"the expression of the secret attraction to a chaos which lies concealed in the very bosom of the ordered universe, and is perpetually striving after new and marvellous births." Ancient art is simpler and clearer, and natural only in its delineation of individual objects and qualities not in their real chaotic relationship to the world. Romantic conceptions appear less ordered and more fragmentary, but actually approach closer to the secret of the universe. (23) The so-called licenses of the romantic drama - the change of time or place, the contrast of comic and tragic, the mixture of dialogue and lyric - are in fact "true beauties of the romantic drama". In the theaters of England and Spain Schlegel finds the highest manifestations of romanticism.

England itself for a long time did not realize the treasure it had in Shakespeare. While the great poet lived, he and his works were duly honored. During the seventeenth century Shakespeare suffered under the buffets of a multitude of critics, and only arose to his deserved position during the latter eighteenth century. In France, whose literary views Schlegel condemns with vehemence, the voice of Voltaire branding his superior a "drunken savage" is the sound that dominates the age. Everywhere but in Germany more words have been spoken and written against Shakespeare than in his favor. (24)

(23) A. W. Schlegel, Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature (translated by John Black), London, 1883, pp. 342-343.

(24). Ibid., pp. 345-348.

Assailing the view that Shakespeare lived in a crude age, Schlegel brings out the fact that all the greatness of England stems from this great age of Elizabeth, an age in which England was in contact with all parts of the world, which stands as a model of true mental cultivation, which assumed a sensible attitude toward morals and dramatic decency. There is not a single word of truth, says Schlegel, in the supposition that Shakespeare was a rude fellow, unlearned, sporting his vulgarities for vulgar audiences. Shakespeare was a child of a well-to-do and respectable family. It is true that he didn't have the advantages of a formal higher education. Yet he was successful far beyond the degree of most literary toilers of his age. Certainly he must have realized that some of his works were scheduled for survival in later ages. (25)

The second lecture on Shakespeare (Lecture XXIII) contains the famous discussion of Shakespeare's learning. "Shakespeare war arm an toter Gelehrsamkeit, abes er besass eine Fülle lebendiger und anwendbarer Kenntnisse." (26) Poor in dead learning, but possessing a rich living and practicable knowledge, is the gist of Schlegel's well-founded opinion. Shakespeare was only slightly familiar with the ancient tongues, and not a modern linguist either. With English works and translations into English he was apparently very familiar. Conclusions

(25) Ibid., pp. 348-354

(26) A. W. Schlegel, "Shakespeares Kenntnisse", Das Oxforder Buch deutscher Prosa, Oxford, 1943, p. 280.

that Shakespeare was ignorant of the world and the course of history have been based upon his geographical inaccuracies and his anachronisms. They were not, says Schlegel, the results of an ignorance of the true facts, but rather of a realization of the unimportance of such minor points. Occasionally, it is to be thought Shakespeare actually inserted these blunders for effect. In Hamlet, for example, the fact that the actual events of the play took place historically long before there were any universities does not, from the poetic standpoint, prevent Shakespeare from altering circumstances so that Hamlet becomes a university philosopher. (27) In every case Shakespeare's costuming reproduces the essential spirit of the age - not the exact outward appearance. This factor allows greater concentration upon poetic and eternal truth. All of his characters appeared, in his time, in European dress. (28)

The idea of Shakespeare's artlessness is to Schlegel's view absolutely false. "To me he appears a profound artist, and not a blind and wildly luxuriant genius. I consider, generally speaking, all that has been said on the subject a mere fable, a blind and extravagant

(27) A. W. Schlegel, Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature (translated by J. Black), London, 1883, pp. 354-356.

(28) Ibid., pp. 356-358.

error. (29) Shakespeare was a genius, and as such his cultivation was a part of his very soul. He did not think about his art in terms of rules, but he was conscious of it nevertheless. His plays play, and not by luck. Critics of Shakespeare like to illustrate his excellencies with separate speeches or scenes from his plays. They are unwilling to tackle the job of comprehensive criticism and interpretation. Yet no other than a comprehensive view is proper, unless one wishes to be like the "pedant in Hierocles, who exhibited a brick as a sample of his house." In judging Shakespeare, one must have an open mind. "In all Art and Poetry, but more especially in the romantic, the Fancy lays claim to be considered as an independent mental power governed according to its own laws." (30)

Schlegel recapitulates his work on Romeo and Juliet, to which brief previous reference has been made in this paper. (31)

(29) No German critic has stated exactly this view before Schlegel. The Sturm und Drangers revelled in Shakespeare's artlessness. Others excused his artlessness on behalf of his other virtues. Some one or two condemned him for it. None declared it a false idea. Of the whole group, Lessing came closest to Schlegel in the declaration that Shakespeare had a form of art. Lessing, however, spoke of it as an uncultivated, instinctive form of art akin to the Greek. Schlegel says it is a cultivated art, and on its own foundations.

(30) A. W. Schlegel's Lectures, pp. 358-361.

(31) "Uber Shakespeare's Romeo und Julia" in Schiller's Die Horen, 1797.

He mentions his findings that every part of the whole play was necessary but not superfluous. Nothing could be added, removed, or changed, without ruining a perfect piece of work. What was true there in Romeo and Juliet could also be illustrated in any of his plays. (32)

Characterization in Shakespeare is supremely adequate. The writer could place himself in the position of almost any being in the universe, and emit the proper words for the situation and the character. Wisely, Shakespeare never became an analyst of character. (Possibly here Schlegel has in mind such works as Lillo's London Merchant where didacticism was uppermost in the writer's mind.) Shakespeare's characters are individuals before all else, yet they have in them the broader features of the whole species to which they belong. In portraying the passions, Shakespeare is without equal. They are not implanted passions, but naturally grown ones, the growth of which the audience is allowed to see and feel. (33)

Shakespeare's word-plays have been scorned, yet they are natural. Every race has delighted in these little linguistic trickeries. Certainly they are not the highest form of art, but Sophocles used them. Shakespeare's moral indelicacy is also a matter of judgment. The polish of this age (Schlegel's) has led to the construing of many things as indecent which, in Shakespeare's firmer day, were perfectly acceptable.(34)

(32) A. W. Schlegel's Lectures, p. 361

(33) Ibid., pp. 361-366.

(34) Ibid., pp. 366-369.

In everything Shakespeare is true to life. His irony is the artistic representation of the ironies which really do occur in life. The placing side-by-side of comic scenes and tragic scenes, or even the very mixture of comedy with tragedy, has its counterpart in real life. Shakespeare's comic talent is equal to his tragic. He does not draw caricatures. He does imitate the farce, but in this imitation as the germ is some farcical condition of real life. Shakespeare's clowns and fools are carryovers from the days when wealthy men, or even women, hired witty wretches to dissolve their boredom. (35)

Statements that Shakespeare's language is ungrammatical are not valid unless proof can be given that the indicted constructions never occurred among his contemporaries. They actually did occur, and were understood. His was not a day of linguistic maturity when rules guided the poet. His was the day of the formation of language. Modern English, Schlegel feels, has lost a great deal of vigor with its attainment of correctness. Occasionally Shakespeare becomes extravagant in use of language; at times his conciseness causes obscurity. But in general his is the greatest model of the English tongue in existence. "On all he has impressed the stamp of his mighty spirit." His verse is for the most part iambic pentameter. Prose and verse are admixed in his plays, but the station of the speakers is at all times observed in the choice of the medium. (36)

(35) Ibid., pp. 369-372.

(36) Ibid., pp. 373-378.

An essential statement is made by Schlegel with regard to Shakespeare's correctness. Although all of Shakespeare's plays bear the unmistakable stamp of his genius, yet he is the most free of all poets from the restraints or prejudices of personal mannerisms or habits. "Rather is he, such is the diversity of tone and color, which varies according to the quality of his subjects he assumes, a very Proteus. Each of his compositions is like a world of its own, moving in its own sphere." Schlegel then explains that Shakespeare can be considered definitely correct even if the correctness is a following of his own dramatic sense. At any rate, Schlegel means, Shakespeare demonstrates a correctness of as high an order as any rule follower among the Ancients or the Moderns. "If the formation of a work throughout, even in its minutest parts, in conformity with a leading idea; if the domination of one animating spirit over all the means of execution, deserves the name of correctness (and this, excepting in matters of grammar, is the only proper sense of the term); we shall then, after allowing to Shakespeare all the higher qualities which demand our admiration, be also compelled, in most cases, to concede to him the title of a correct poet." (37) Besides affirming Shakespeare's correctness, the above quotation brings out another of Schlegel's important conclusions on Shakespeare: that each of the plays conforms throughout to a leading idea. Formerly, much had been said about Shakespeare's extravagancies

(37) Ibid., p. 378.

and his not taking the trouble to adhere to the point of the drama. Schlegel feels that Shakespeare adhered unerringly throughout every one of his works, and that each work, as it flowed from the master's pen, was perfect. With Goethe Schlegel could never have agreed. Goethe approved Schröder's adaptations and alterations, and performed some himself upon Romeo and Juliet; he expressed the opinion that, if Shakespeare-maniacs persisted in adhering to the original at all costs, Shakespeare would be driven from the stage into the closet -- and he felt that actually Shakespeare's originals were better fitted for the closet anyway. Goethe granted that Shakespeare was a great poet, but held that his dramatic qualities were defective. (38) Schlegel honored the perfection of Shakespeare more rationally and more profoundly than the most ardent Sturm und Dranger.

This broad general interpretation of Shakespeare, his times, and his work, is the part of Schlegel's criticism which most firmly held his position among the great Shakespeare critics. It is the section which contains the key ideas for the more detailed critical reviews of the individual works which followed in the next few lectures. Schlegel's most comprehensive idea is that Shakespeare is a romantic, and nothing else. He was a correct writer intrinsically and as a romanticist. He was not strong in purely academic learning, but he was widely familiar with works in his own language. He was also very well informed about the world and all classes of society. He was a conscious artist.

(38) See discussion of Goethe's Shakespeare und kein Ende in chapter II of this paper.

Throughout all his plays runs a leading idea, and each play circulates in a world if its own.

Lecture XXIV reviews and discusses the comedies. We must remember that this criticism was delivered among a group of lectures treating the general subjects of art and literature. The individual plays are treated briefly -- each one in a few hundred words. All of Schlegel's criticism is brilliant and worthy of study, but for the purposes of this paper one or two of the play-reviews will be taken up as illustrative of his work in the three fields of comedy, tragedy, and history.

Among the treatments of the comedies we find a discussion of As You Like It. In this play, Schlegel believes, "what is done is not so essential as what is said." A strange collection of characters has been assembled by chance in the Forest of Arden: a dethroned Duke, two disguised Princesses, a court fool, and the native inhabitants of the forest, the shepherds and shepherdesses who live an idealized natural existence. This motley collection is placed in the charming pastoral scene together. "We see always the shady dark green landscape in the background, and breathe in imagination the fresh air of the forest. The hours are here measured by no clocks, no regulated recurrence of duty or of toil: they flow on unnumbered by voluntary occupation or fanciful idleness, to which, according to his humour or disposition, every one yields himself, and this unrestrained freedom compensates

them all for the lost conveniences of life." (39) Meditation beneath the shade of a tree, gayety on the groves of the forest, or the chase through the green rusticity are the employments. Only love among all the human passions has been able to make its way into this retreat. All are affected alike by this one passion, from the shepherdess who falls in love with the disguised Rosalind to the "chivalrous youth who hangs his love-ditty to a tree." The fool philosophizes contemptuously about external show and the illusion of love, purposely courting the ugliest woman in the region as a mistress. (40) Schlegel believes that Shakespeare's leading idea throughout this work was "to show that to call forth the poetry which has its indwelling in nature and the human mind," it is merely necessary to reject artificiality and restraint, and to give back "to both mind and nature their original liberty." Throughout the play, Schlegel says, Shakespeare is expressing this idea of relaxation and the natural life. (41) "Whoever," says this critic, "affects to be displeased, if in this romantic forest the ceremonial of dramatic art is not duly observed, ought in justice to be delivered over to the wise fool, to be led gently out of it to some prosaical region." (42) In this treatment of As You Like It, Schlegel has illustrated the "leading idea" theory about Shakespeare. Here it is Shakespeare's illustration that the environment of a Forest of Arden will awaken the inborn and universal poetic instincts of all levels of society. Perhaps

(39) A. W. Schlegel's Lectures, p. 391.

(40) Ibid.

(41) Ibid., p. 392.

(42) Ibid.

if there was a real forest of Arden, the idea could be proved true.

As our other illustration of Schlegel's criticism of the comedies, we take the treatment of The Tempest. Here again Schlegel perceives little real progress of dramatic action. The love affair of Ferdinand and Miranda is a foregone conclusion, and its success is certain. The barriers cast in its way by Prospero are seen to be merely apparent. The true virtue of this play is its marvellous poetry and its characterization (not realistic but beautiful). Miranda's and Ferdinand's love is beautifully brought out. On his part it is the reflection of chivalrous magnanimity; on hers, it is "the virgin openness of a heart which, brought up far from the world on an uninhabited island, has never learned to disguise its innocent movements." (43) Caliban is a mixture of gnome and savage. "It is as if the use of reason and human speech were communicated to an awkward ape." (44) As Caliban is in part the image of the heavy element of earth, so is Ariel the opposite image of air; yet neither one is merely an allegorical figure, but they are real, individual beings. "Ariel hovers sweetly over the whole as the personified genius of the wonderful fable." (45) This beautifully sympathetic criticism of Schlegel's may be found reflected all down through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

From the comedies we now turn to the tragedies. Romeo and Juliet, that most read and most tender of all Shakespeare's treatments

(43) Ibid., p. 395.

(44) Ibid.

(45) Ibid.

of love, serves as the first object of Schlegel's interpretation. "Romeo and Juliet is a picture of love and its pitiable fate, in a world whose atmosphere is too sharp for this the tenderest blossom of human life." (46) Here we have Shakespeare's "leading idea" again. Schlegel repeats his earlier opinions on Romeo and Juliet (47): it is exact in dramatic arrangement, every character is in place, and all circumstances down to the smallest detail have been consciously built to fit the plan. (48) Schlegel is a master at summarizing the tone of each drama.(49) Of this one he says, in language beautiful enough to grace poetry: "All that is most intoxicating in the odour of a southern spring,--all that is languishing in the song of the nightingale, or voluptuous in the first opening of the rose, all alike breathe forth from this poem. .... (It) shines with the colours of the dawn of morning, but a dawn whose purple clouds already announce the thunder of a sultry day." (50)

A much different tragedy is King Lear. Here we have a case of humanity knocked from the heights down to the very depths of helpless nakedness. The incorporation of the two plots in one story does not

(46) Ibid., p. 400.

(47) In "Ueber Shakespeare's Romeo und Julia", 1797.

(48) A. W. Schlegel's Lectures, p. 401.

(49) Although for August Wilhelm Schlegel's Lectures the writer of this paper has employed a translation (all other works have been read in original German), a check of the work used (Black's translation) with the original reveals that the language of the original by Schlegel is, if anything, more beautiful than the translation.

(50) A. W. Schlegel's Lectures, pp. 400-401.

destroy the unity of the whole. The Gloucester plot is essentially related to the Lear plot, and the parallel between the misery of Lear and the misery of Gloucester adds much to the artistic value of the play. Likewise, Edmund, out of the Gloucester plot, is instrumental in the Lear plot and related essentially with Lear's wicked daughters. Schlegel compares Cordelia with Antigone. Her death, the death of a being of heavenly beauty, has been considered too cruel by English adaptors, and the play is usually remade so that she remains happy and triumphant. But there is but one right ending for this tragedy, and Shakespeare has written it. (51) "The persons of this drama have only such a faint belief in Providence as heathens may be supposed to have; and the poet here wishes to show us that this belief requires a wider range than the dark pilgrimage on earth to be established in full extent." (52) Again, as always, Schlegel seems to have the 'yes man' attitude with regard to what Shakespeare has done. A critic with preconceived ideas about what a writer of drama must do maybe would condemn this as 'blind' criticism. But he would be wrong, for Schlegel's views rise out of as deep a knowledge of Shakespeare as anyone's until his time.

One more sample will suffice to illustrate Schlegel's work on the historical drama of Shakespeare. The idea that Julius Caesar goes too far past its climax is wrong, says Schlegel. Caesar's death is not the final or highest point of the action, because the hero of the play

(51) Ibid., pp. 411-413.

(52) Ibid., p. 413.

is not Caesar, but Brutus. Yet, Schlegel believes that the last two acts of the play have been injured by a "partial falling off of the last two acts compared with the preceding in external splendour and rapidity." (53) The aftermath of Caesar's death exerts more power in the play than the man himself exerted in life. His "shade is more powerful to avenge his fall than he himself was to guard against it."(54)

At this point the study of the formation of Shakespearean criticism in Germany comes to a close. Beginning adversely in Gottsched, the trend immediately reversed in J. E. Schlegel. Until the time of Lessing, opinions pro and con were more nearly balanced. From Lessing through Sturm und Drang Shakespeare met with no resistance. Then, with the classicism of Schiller, and more especially of Goethe, we see Shakespeare again being subjected to a milder form of adverse criticism. Then at last, in Ludwig Tieck and the Schlegel brothers, the trend reaches its highest point in an epoch of authoritative romanticism. August Wilhelm Schlegel becomes the leading expounder of Shakespeare's German reputation, and as a consequence of his and, in England, Coleridge's work, the romantic interpretation has dominated, and still dominates, the Shakespearean sphere.

What Schlegel has done with the work of German critics who went before him can only be hypothetically stated. He has not accepted

(53) Ibid., p. 415.

(54) Ibid.

(93) Ibid., p. 115.

(94) Ibid.

the pure opinions of anyone. Broadly speaking, he had adopted the general enthusiasm of the Sturm und Drangers (principally Herder's) and their ardent love of Shakespeare. He has not advocated, however, an attempt to imitate Shakespeare and thereby to establish a German national drama. One feels that Schlegel perhaps thinks, with Lessing, that Shakespeare can be studied but not plundered. In one other thing, too, Schlegel can be seen to resemble Lessing--namely, he insists that Shakespeare is an artist who operates according to a plan. But Schlegel is much more valid in terming Shakespeare a conscious artist, than Lessing was in naming him an instinctive Aristotelian. The opinion of Herder and his predecessors that Shakespeare was a natural spirit endowed with a God-given gift of dipicting nature would, in essentials, be agreed with by Schlegel; but to the latter the naturalness of Shakespeare seems but a very small part of his genius. Goethe and Schlegel are for the most part opposed on their major points. The young Goethe would have been cheered by Schlegel as going in the right general direction, but a little off the track. The classical Goethe, the Goethe who granted that Shakespeare was a great poet but a poor theatrical dramatist, and who advocated the alteration of Shakespeare's originals, could never have struck an accord with the great romantic critic Schlegel. Schlegel could not tolerate Shakespeare in any form but the original, unaltered. Ludwig Tieck and August Schlegel's brother Friedrich were like two limbs from the main stem, and naturally agreed as parts of the whole.

One cannot leave off with a study of German criticism of Shakespeare in general, and of Schlegel's work in particular, without at least a brief mention of the entrance into England of the romantic ideas from Germany. Coleridge's trip to Germany, and his avid interest in things German, naturally led him to a perusal of some of the Shakespearean criticism of the Germans. When he began his lectures on Shakespeare in 1811, he had no doubt already assimilated much German material on the subject, either written or from conversations. Whether he had seen Schlegel's volume of lectures, Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur, is uncertain. But in his ninth lecture he states that the German writer's book had been delivered to him just before the lecture, and that he was highly pleased with the work. "What I did read I approved, and I should be disposed to applaud the work much more highly, were it not that in so doing I should, in a manner, applaud myself. The sentiments and opinions are coincident with those to which I gave utterance in my lectures at the Royal Institution. It is not a little wonderful that so many ages have elapsed since the time of Shakespeare, and that it should remain for foreigners first to feel truly and to appreciate justly his mighty genius." (55) In 1818 there was a charge that he had plagiarized his lectures from Schlegel. The similarity of the material tends to affirm the charge, while some other circumstances seem to deny it. (56) At any rate, after 1811 or 1812, Schlegel had carried German Shakespeare ideas into England in a mature and authoritative

(55) As quoted by John Louis Haney, The German Influence on Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Philadelphia, 1902, p. 29.

(56) Haney, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

form, and what Coleridge said about the first worthy appreciation of Shakespeare coming from Germany is largely true. Coleridge recognized the general situation of Shakespeare on the Continent, saying that Shakespeare is there honored in a double way--by German admiration and French contempt. That he knew the whole dark story of Shakespeare's reputation in Germany from the beginnings is unlikely. (57)

(57) Ibid.

ABSTRACT

I

In Germany, the period from the 1590's to 1682 finds only a meager knowledge of Shakespearean plots. The name of the English author is unknown. English players had transported some of Shakespeare's works into Germany, and a few German writers during the century made adaptations of material which could have stemmed originally from Shakespeare, or from sources common to them and the Englishman as well. Jacob Ayrer (c. 1605) wrote two works which seem related to Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing and The Tempest - Von der schönen Phänicia and Comedia von der schönen Sidea. Titus Andronicus was the first Shakespearean work to reach print in Germany. It appeared in a collection of English plays in 1620. Kretschmer's Almanac records performances of Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Merchant of Venice, and King Lear in the year 1626 in Dresden. In 1658 we have the first German adaptation (anonymous) of The Taming of the Shrew under the title Die wunderbare Heurath Petruvio mit der bösen Catharinen.

Shortly after mid-century, Andreas Gryphius put forth a play based, directly or more likely indirectly, upon the comic interlude of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Again in 1672 we find a notice mentioning a performance of a version of the farcical Taming of the Shrew story at Zittau. The plot of Twelfth Night was employed in a performance at

ABSTRACT

I

Braunschweig entitled Tugend und Liebesstreit in the year 1677. In 1682 we find a treatment of the comic interlude of A Midsummer Night's Dream by Christian Weise. Later, by the same author, the play Die böse Catharina readapts the Taming of the Shrew.

In the year 1682 we find the first record of a knowledge of Shakespeare's name and personality in Daniel Georg Morhof's Unterricht von der Teutschen Sprache. Following this, the next mentions of his name occurred in 1694 and 1695 in two publications - Cramer's Vindiciae Nominis Germanici, and Acta Eruditorum. In 1708 Barthold Feind's Gedanken von der Opera contains a passage attesting to Shakespeare's power. Buddeus' Allgemeines historisches Lexicon contained the first sketch of Shakespeare's life (in 1709). The same sketch appeared again in 1715, 1725, and 1733, in Mencke's Gelehrten - Lexicon. In 1732 Bentheim's Engelländischer Kirch- und Schulen- Staat contained another short recognition of Shakespeare's great power. Bodmer, a Swiss, stands on the very brink of serious Shakespearean criticism with his mentions of a "Saspar" in Critische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie, and in Critische Betrachtungen der poetischen Gemählde der Dichter.

In 1741 C. W. von Borck published a translation of Julius Caesar. Immediately Gottsched struck at it with an unjust condemnation which appeared in his Beyträge in the same year. Gottsched's disciple, J. E. Schlegel, writing in Gottsched's own Beyträge, defended Shakespeare and advised reading his work. This was the start of the only genuine controversy in Germany over Shakespeare's worth. In 1753 an anonymous pro-Shakespeare article appeared in Neue Erweiterungen der Erkenntniss

und Vergnügens, followed by an article on the same side by C. F. Nicolai.

II

Lessing's criticism of Shakespeare represents the beginning of the great German Shakespearean criticism. After two brief mentions of Shakespeare in 1750 and 1758, the famous condemnation of Gottsched and exaltation of Shakespeare appeared in Letter No. 17 of Briefe, die neueste Litteratur Betreffend. The chief ideas about Shakespeare expressed by Lessing in this letter were -- 1) Shakespeare is instinctively classical, and 2) Shakespeare's dramas resemble the German Volksdrama. In 1760 Moses Mendelsohn declared that Shakespeare's power allows him to succeed in spite of his dramatic improprieties.

Between 1762 and 1766, C. M. Wieland published a translation of twenty-two Shakespearean plays. With this collection on hand, H. W. von Gerstenberg propounded the idea that Shakespeare could not be judged according to ancient rules. Writing in his Briefe über Merkwürdigkeiten der Litteratur (1766-7), he calls Shakespeare's works "living pictures of moral nature". In 1767 and 1768, Lessing adds a few ideas to his Shakespeare criticism in the Hamburgische Dramaturgie. He discusses Shakespeare's use of ghosts and of love. Herder combined the conservatism of Lessing and the enthusiasm of von Gerstenberg in his Shakespearean criticism in Von deutscher Art und Kunst (1773). Drama must grow out of the life of the people where it thrives, he declared. This ushered in Strum und Drang. Strum und Drang was a period of

II

imitation rather than criticism. Goethe, Lenz, Klinger, and others, produced original plays in the style of Shakespeare. Between 1775 and 1777 Eschenburg revised Wieland's translations. Also about the same time Schröder's adaptations of Shakespeare were at the height of their popularity.

Goethe's greatest piece of Shakespearean criticism appeared in his novel, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (1795). He made the famous simile about Hamlet's being like an "oak tree planted in a costly jar". Goethe's later Shakespearean criticism in Shakespeare und Kein Ende (1815) expresses the opinion that the Englishman is a good poet, but a poor dramatist. Schiller also appears to have felt that Shakespeare's works were in need of alteration and pruning.

III

Three names stand out in the romantic period of German Shakespeare criticism -- Tieck, F. Schlegel, and A. W. Schlegel. A. W. Schlegel began his great series of opinions on Shakespeare with his article in Die Horen, "Etwas über William Shakespeare bei Gelegenheit Wilhelm Meisters" (1796). In the same year Tieck published an article as introduction to his edition of The Tempest, entitled Abhandlung über Shakespeares Behandlung des Wunderbaren. Here Tieck adopts the stand that Shakespeare's power places him above the limits of rules, and follows up with a clear discussion of Shakespeare's use of the supernatural.

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he vies with Goethe's "costly-jar" interpretation of Hamlet. He feels that Hamlet is a man whose active powers are lost by concentration of all his energy in his mind. In the same year A. W. Schlegel concerns himself with the sources of Romeo and Juliet in his article, Ueber Shakespeares Romeo und Julia. He also expresses his absolute agreement with Shakespeare's ending of the drama. In 1797 A. W. Schlegel began his great translations. From 1809 to 1811 he delivered the famous lectures which were published under the title Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur. He clarifies the difference between classical and romantic literature. Then he reviews the history of Shakespeare's reputation in England and on the continent. Shakespeare, he holds, neither lived in a crude age, nor was without culture. Shakespeare was a conscious artist. Shakespeare's characterization is discussed at length. Word plays are to be excused in Shakespeare's work, says A. W. Schlegel, for a number of reasons. Shakespeare is intrinsically correct. Throughout each of Shakespeare's plays runs a leading idea. Each play is then taken up briefly but brilliantly. Schlegel represents the culmination of the trends which began with Gottsched in 1741. Coleridge became familiar with the work of the Germans on the subject of Shakespeare, and did much to spread a knowledge of this work among the English. He was charged with having plagiarized Schlegel.

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